

PARANOIA™

TROUBLESHOOTERS



QUILLIAMS
2009

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New *PARANOIA* edition
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PARANOIA™

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THE COMPUTER

Looking after your best interests

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Security Clearance *ULTRAVIOLET* WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen of Security Clearance *VIOLET* or lower is treason punishable by a long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.

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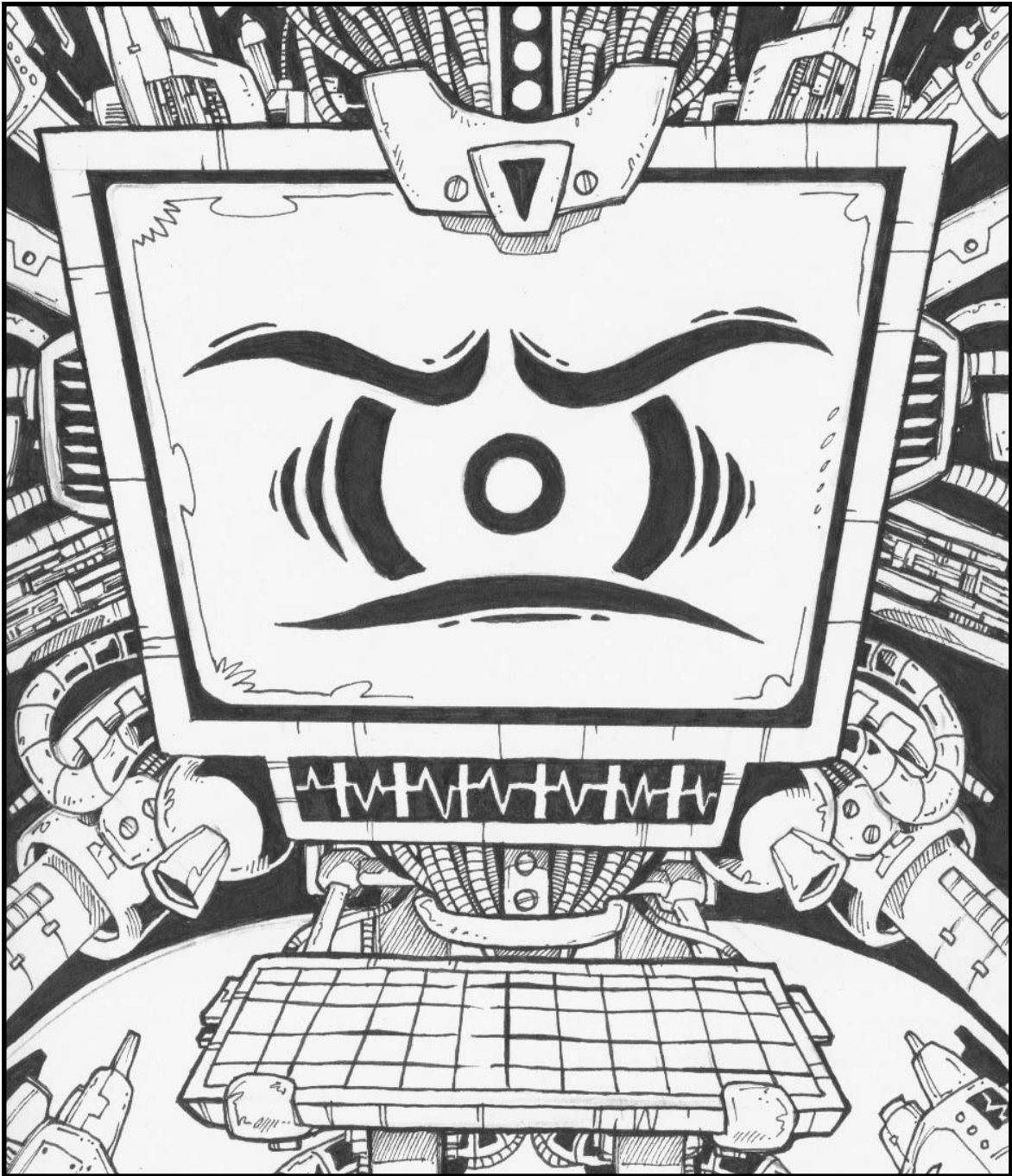
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TROUBLESHOOTERS



STAY ALERT!

TRUST NO-ONE!

KEEP YOUR LASER HANDY!

WELCOME, CITIZEN, TO ALPHA COMPLEX. WELCOME
TO YEAR 214 OF THE COMPUTER.

1. Introduction

**Now
Commencing
PARANOIA...**

**SECURITY
CLEARANCE
INFRARED—
CLEARED FOR
ALL CITIZENS**

May I be of assistance?

Sure. Why don't you tell me how this roleplaying game works?

I'm sorry, citizen. That information is not available at this time.

Huh? Most games are really eager to teach you the rules.

Not *PARANOIA*. In *PARANOIA* you don't know the rules. You don't know who your enemies are. You don't know how your equipment works. You're never sure why you're doing anything. One thing you do know: Everyone is out to get you.

Ignorance and fear; fear and ignorance. These are your watchwords.

Uhh... The back cover says something about a computer.

In *PARANOIA* you play a Troubleshooter in service to The Computer. Trust The Computer! The Computer is your friend! You are The Computer's trusted agent and protector of Alpha Complex, The Computer's underground city of the far future.

Why am I a Troubleshooter?

You turned in a friend for treason. The Computer had him executed for betraying Alpha Complex. The Computer rewarded you for your loyalty.

Now you root out all traitors and apprehend or execute them. You uncover corruption among The Computer's servants and turn them into Internal Security. You find trouble and you shoot it.

What's a 'traitor'?

A traitor is a malevolent human citizen who has betrayed his friend The Computer and seeks to destroy The Computer, Alpha Complex, humanity and life as we know it. You must unmask and destroy all traitors. Watch out! Traitors are everywhere!

Mutants are traitors. These genetic freaks have uncontrollable abilities they selfishly use for their own advancement, rather than to serve Alpha Complex. You must subdue or eliminate them.

Members of secret societies are traitors. In organisations unsanctioned by The Computer they conspire irresponsibly to undermine the good order of Alpha Complex. You must destroy them.

By the way... you are a mutant and a member of a secret society. You are a traitor.

Wait, I'm a traitor?

That is correct. Your fellow Troubleshooters would be eager to unmask you as a traitor and execute you. You work with many Troubleshooters. They all carry powerful weapons.

Let me get this straight. My job is to hunt and kill traitors. I work with other people

who have the same orders. They all want to kill me?

Not quite. They all want to kill traitors. They don't know you're a Commie mutant traitor. Yet.

If they find out?

They'll apprehend or kill you, as any right-thinking citizen would. Of course, if you convict them of treason first, The Computer will have them executed and you may survive. Note, though, false accusations of treason are themselves treason.

So I want to prove they're traitors before they can prove I'm a traitor. If I don't, I die?

Precisely. Dead traitors cannot testify to their own innocence or to your guilt. It is convenient to be the last Troubleshooter on your team left alive.

The good news is, Troubleshooters routinely get shot, stabbed, incinerated, mangled, poisoned, blown to bits and occasionally stapled, so you have many opportunities to ensure your teammates meet their just end.

Stay alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy!

...Are you sure this will be fun?

Certainly, citizen! Fun is mandatory. The Computer says so and The Computer is your friend. Do you doubt The Computer? Doubting The Computer is treason.

Uh! No, certainly not. If The Computer says fun is mandatory, then this certainly will be fun. Only a Commie mutant traitor could believe otherwise.



TROUBLESHOOTERS



'This will be fun. Failure to have fun will result in termination.'

Excellent! You're getting the idea. As a sign of its trust, The Computer promotes you to Security Clearance RED. Welcome to PARANOIA.

Attention, player!

Obtain paper and a pencil. Obtain one 20-sided polyhedral die, available in hobby stores. Obtain three to six other players, one of whom will be the Gamemaster (GM) who runs the game.

Whether or not you are familiar with the concept of roleplaying games, read the non-example of play later in this introduction. If you are already familiar with other roleplaying games, also read the boxed text titled 'What You Must Forget.'

Now you may begin to play **PARANOIA**. True, you know nothing about the game yet. This is acceptable and even desirable for **PARANOIA**.

If you insist, you may read all of the Player section, which begins on page

4 and ends on page 40. It teaches a bit about the **PARANOIA** setting, how to create your Troubleshooter character and nothing at all of any importance about the rules of the game. The Player section is classified Security Clearance **RED**. You are now a Troubleshooter with Clearance **RED**, so you may read this section without fear of execution.

The rest of this book – the Gamemaster section, Sourcebook and Mission – is classified Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**. This is above your Clearance, so you are not permitted to read it. Only the Gamemaster, the person who runs the game, may read it. If you read any Gamemaster material, or display any knowledge of its contents during play, you are a traitor and subject to summary execution.

Of course, you paid for this nice book and would like to get your money's worth, so naturally you will read it anyway. Do not tell your Gamemaster you did. Pretend you haven't read it. If he asks, look him straight in the eye, cross your heart, spit over your shoulder and promise you have never, ever read the book and you

have no intention of doing so. Of course he will believe you.

By the way – and this is for real – do not read the mission! No, really, don't. A mission is a story that the Gamemaster will inflict on – run for – your characters. If you know all the plot details and surprises in advance, you'll have less fun when you play.

Attention, Gamemaster!

Oh fortunate one, most trusted of The Computer's servants, you are Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET** and therefore may read this entire book. Read the Player section first so you know what your players know, then read the rest. You do not have to memorise anything; **PARANOIA** is a game of freewheeling improvisation and you can revise, upgrade, ditch or bluff about any rule as you go along. Players cannot argue with you—they are not allowed to show that they know the rules.

The Player section includes rules for creating Troubleshooter characters. The first few times you play, we suggest you give your players pregenerated (ready-made) characters.

The first time you run **PARANOIA**, use the mission provided in this book. This is an unusual game and by using the mission, you'll see how to do things. Later you'll devise your own missions to delight and torment your players.

Attention, longtime players and Gamemasters!

Citizen: Friend Computer!

The Computer: At your service!

Citizen: Please tell what happened when you Crashed in the Crash Course Manual and how you came back and what happened to Alpha Base.

The Computer: Your request is senseless. The Computer has never Crashed. There is no such place as Alpha Base. Any statement to the contrary is a rumour. Rumours are treason.

Citizen: But what about the Secret Society Wars and MegaWhoops and Reboot Camp?

INTRODUCTION

The Computer: The *PARANOIA* products that refer to these fictitious events have never existed. They are now un-products. You have experienced bizarre hallucinations.

Be reassured! Due to highly advanced engineering and multiple redundant systems, your friend The Computer cannot Crash. It is impossible. The Computer cannot *fatal exception error*.

[Feedback squeal, followed by a long pause.]

Citizen: Um... Friend Computer?
Computer: [Happy xylophone tune.] Welcome to *PARANOIA*. Please press Control-Alt-Delete to log on.

The first edition (1984), second edition (1987) and [redacted due to legal action by a certain megacorporation] edition of *PARANOIA* were, of course, perfect. The Computer says so. This Anniversary Edition is even more perfect. Entirely new character creation and rules systems make the game more like what it really is, while classic rule systems are brought back to tweak your nostalgia glands. To improve efficiency and fun, characters from previous editions are completely incompatible with the new rules. Other (non-fun) games would offer a character

conversion system. For this new edition no conversion is required, because older characters could not possibly have survived this long.

Non-example of play

Nearly every published roleplaying game (RPG) starts with an explanation of how an RPG works. We Famous Game Designers used to skip reading these, until we realised they tell a lot about the designers' philosophy. Many RPGs describe roleplaying as 'It's "let's pretend," but with rules.' Others call it a deeply emotional collaboration in storytelling. Some offer scholarly and arcane discussions of Gamist, Narrativist and Simulationist RPG philosophy. Some indie games even compare roleplaying to laying down tracks in a hot jazz band.

We like all these descriptions. *PARANOIA* is somewhat like all of them, in a non-jazz-band sort of way, but it's also different. *PARANOIA* is also something of a psychological exercise.

Because of this, we will not tell you how to play, unless you are cleared for it. We won't even show you an example of play

for this game. Instead, here is an example from some other game:

PARANOIA is set in a high-tech future underground city of lasers, robots, cloned citizens and an insane Computer. This game has no character classes – no warriors, wizards, priests or rogues – no magic and aside from the occasional giant radioactive mutant cockroach, no monsters.

Yet, that said, a good way to dramatise the unique nature of *PARANOIA* is to imagine another RPG's familiar dungeon crawl filtered through the paranoid mindset.

If Popular Fantasy RPG™ worked like *PARANOIA*

Gamemaster: You're in a long dungeon hallway with a dirt floor, stone walls and an arching stone ceiling. There are burning torches in wall sconces every 10 feet. You see one door.

Warrior player: What colour is the stone?

GM: Sort of orange.

Rogue player: Aah! I'm only Clearance **RED!** Get me out of here!

Priest player: I'm casting Mass RAISE



'I cast magic missile at the darkness.'



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Security Clearance to make us all **ORANGE**. [Passes note to the GM: 'I'm also casting Subvert to Communism on the warrior.']

Wizard player: I'm using the Gem of Memory to document the priest's spellcasting. I, uh, may want to study his technique later.

Priest: Of course, of course. [Looks significantly at the rogue, whom he subverted earlier. The rogue nods and passes a note to the GM. The GM rolls a 20-sided die (1d20).]

GM: All right. You're all **ORANGE** for the moment and can pass safely down the hallway. Your orders, you recall, were to investigate the door. [Passes note to warrior: 'You feel a strange, treasonous impulse to overthrow the existing social order and restore power to the people.']

Warrior [Gulps]: Come, Comra – fellow heroes, let us break down the door!

Wizard: Wait! Did you almost call us 'Comrades'? That's a Commie word!

Priest: Of course he didn't. I heard nothing of the sort.

Rogue: Nor I. Are you levelling false accusations against our leader? That's treason.

Wizard: Don't anybody move! I'm not only levelling accusations, I'm levelling my Wand of Fireballs against all three of these traitors. By the way, I'm recording all of this with the Gem of Memory.

GM: When you reach for it, you notice the Gem is missing.

Rogue: Uh-oh! You've lost a valuable magical item. That'll mean a heavy fine at the guildhall.

Wizard: I'm firing a fireball at all of them!

GM [Rolls a 20-sided die]: I'm sorry, it appears your experimental Wand of Fireballs has backfired. In a trice you are immolated in a ball of flame. Fortunately the fire is orange, so at least your charred body hasn't breached its proper Security Clearance. Scratch one wizard. Your next simulacrum has been dispatched from the guildhall and should arrive shortly.

Wizard: You bastards are gonna pay.

GM: No comments from the currently dead, please. Suddenly the door opens. A huge hobgoblin in leather armour stands there with his broadsword drawn. On his chest you see the mark of a silver hand.

What you must forget

If you have prior experience with other roleplaying games, this is regrettable but can be overlooked. However, it is mandatory to abandon the following notions, which interfere drastically with the **PARANOIA** experience:

1. Solidarity among characters or players. Other (non-fun) RPGs exhort you to do your part in the adventuring party, split the loot equally, avoid internal strife and generally play good little scouts. In **PARANOIA** this trusting behaviour will get you killed six times in six minutes. Trust no one, especially your fellow players.

2. The quest for weapons and loot. Other games reward your efforts with treasure, cool new powers and ever more damaging attacks. Most powerful weapons in **PARANOIA** are experimental. You will learn quickly not to trust experimental weaponry. You have a mutant power but it too is hard to control and prone to backfires. The Computer rewards successful missions with credits, which you can spend on a variety of useful or gratuitous possessions – but only if you're cleared to own them.

3. Shaping a complex personality. In other games you can craft a highly individual character of emotional depth, which grows and changes over time in fascinating ways. In **PARANOIA** it is unwise to grow attached to your Troubleshooter, whose lifespan is typically measured in days, if not hours. The Computer prizes conformity; interesting or outlandish behaviour is not actually illegal but always suspicious. Instead of plumbing depths of character, experience the game's atmosphere. You'll probably enjoy the game more if you treat your Troubleshooter as a stand-in for your own hopes, schemes and fears.

4. Comprehensive attributes, skills and combat options. Many other RPGs have elaborate character creation, movement and combat systems. These games offer a well-designed character a broad range of control in almost any situation. In **PARANOIA** you have no control. The Gamemaster decides all details of movement, combat and the environment. Your character survives entirely at the pleasure of the GM, who shields you from other players so long as you do entertaining things. Entertain or die.

The GM tells you what you see. You say what you want to do. The GM tells you what happens. You don't try to optimise your tactical advantage; instead, you want the best dramatic advantage. The most entertaining character wins; put on a good show and Fate will smile on you. You'll enjoy watching the boring characters die like – well, like Troubleshooters. Won't that be fun? Of course it will. Fun is mandatory.

Rogue: I attack him with –

Warrior: Wait! I wave my fingers at him from under my chin.

Priest and rogue: What?

GM: The hobgoblin nods at your recognition signal and lowers his sword. He waves you all inside. Who's going in first?

Warrior, priest and rogue [Pointing at each other]: Him!

...And so on. To repeat, none of the traditional fantasy elements in this example resemble anything in Alpha

Complex, the underground city of **PARANOIA**. At this point you know nothing much about Alpha Complex or your place in it.

Keep it that way. You may live longer.

2. GREETINGS, RED CITIZEN!

2. Greetings *RED* Citizen!

The Computer introduces you to your new Security Clearance with this comprehensive and entirely accurate guide to fun and success through service to Alpha Complex.

You are required to know and understand all contents or face summary demotion.

- ☉ You are Security Clearance **RED**.
- ☉ You are assigned to a service firm in one of eight Service Groups.
- ☉ You have five backup clone bodies and can purchase more.
- ☉ Hunt traitors: mutants and members of Secret Societies.

About your clearance

The Computer has promoted you from your previous **INFRARED** Clearance to your new and exciting **RED** Clearance. Your new **Security Clearance** signifies The Computer's benevolent trust in you. The Computer is your friend.

To review (as specified in HPD&MCDirective NSC-RED-44A rev 4,675, 'Orientation for the Newly Trusted'), The Computer's system of Security Clearances follows the colours of the electromagnetic spectrum: **RED**, your current clearance, followed in ascending order by **ORANGE**, **YELLOW**, **GREEN**, **BLUE**, **INDIGO** and **VIOLET**. **INFRARED** is below **RED** and **ULTRAVIOLET** (the clearance of the illustrious High Programmers) is above **VIOLET**. The higher a citizen's Clearance, the more deeply The Computer trusts that citizen.

All citizens are required to wear clothing of the same colour as their Security Clearance. As an **INFRARED** you wore black. With your new **RED** Clearance The Computer has thoughtfully provided a new red jumpsuit and boots. Wear them at all times. Failure to comply is treason. (**EXCEPTION**: You may temporarily remove all or part of your clothing for hygienic purposes such as showering. Good hygiene is essential to good citizenship. Poor hygiene is treason.)

The Computer determines each citizen's Clearance with complete impartiality. Higher Clearance means greater responsibility; it also brings benefits. The Computer cares for the needs of all citizens, of course, but it rewards greatly those who sacrifice the most for the sake of society and their fellow beings.

Citizens of higher Clearance are not necessarily more knowledgeable or capable than you. They have advanced solely because they selflessly served the greater good and earned The Computer's trust. Admire, respect and defer to higher Clearance citizens. Failure to defer at all times is insubordination and may be considered as treason.

If you serve The Computer well, you will earn its greater trust and thereby advance in Security Clearance.

Aspire to advance! Seek to serve Alpha Complex in ever greater ways! Failure to aspire may be considered insubordination.

To ensure that only citizens of the requisite competence and trustworthiness have access to restricted areas, The Computer has divided Alpha Complex into coloured areas. Citizens may only enter areas of their Clearance or lower. You must stay within black (**INFRARED**) and **RED** areas at all times. Failure to do so is treason.

Remember, The Computer is your friend!

Your service group assignment

To review (see previous citation for requirement and authority), eight **Service Groups** administer Alpha Complex municipal functions, supervised by The Computer.

The Service Groups:

Armed Forces: Protection against threats both external and internal.

Central Processing Unit (CPU): Executive operations, regulations, records,

justice, human resources and culture engineering.

Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control (HPD&MC): Education, entertainment, housekeeping, crèche management and recreation.

Internal Security (IntSec): Maintenance of good order; location and elimination of traitors.

Power Services: Maintenance of nuclear and other energy sources and primary habitat systems—traffic, air, water and waste.

Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC): Food and industrial production and allocation of resources.

Research & Design (R&D): Creation of new technology and equipment.

Technical Services: Maintenance of bots, vehicles, cloning services, industrial and production systems and electronic and mechanical service systems.

Well before you grew out of Junior Citizen status, The Computer ordered these agencies to outsource most of their duties for greater efficiency. The Service Groups now contract most municipal functions to a wide range of competing *service firms*.

A service firm is a for-profit company that performs duties for a particular Service Group. Any service firm can take on any contract for its supervising group. Each service firm is run by a Board of Directors; high-clearance citizens who selflessly direct its operations on The Computer's behalf for the good of all Alpha Complex. **Immediately report instances of service firm corruption and malfeasance to Internal Security.** Failure to report corruption is treason.

From the time you were decanted, your friend The Computer arranged your education to ideally suit you for a particular Service Group. When you reached age 14 and left your clone crèche, you worked at one of that group's service firms as an **INFRARED** line worker. The Computer acknowledges and thanks you for your years of service there prior to your promotion to Clearance **RED**. Now that you have donned the red



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reflex overalls of the Troubleshooter, The Computer has graciously ordered your service firm to reassign you to a part-time position. You will still work there when not on a Troubleshooter mission.

As explained under 'Cloning,' in the unlikely event that you encounter terminal danger while on a mission, The Computer will order Technical Services to transfer your brain's recorded memories to a new, identical clone body. Unless you are currently on a mission and thus given high priority, Technical Services' backlogs may sometimes keep you out of action for so long that your service firm must regretfully let you go. In these rare cases The Computer assigns you to another service firm in the same group.

If your career is particularly eventful, you may end up at a new service firm after each mission. Won't that be fun?

Cloning

Long ago, in Old Reckoning times before The Computer began guiding Alpha Complex – before Alpha Complex even existed – humans once reproduced by rutting, like vile animals. Shudders and

expressions of revulsion are permitted, though not mandatory.

Because The Computer cares deeply for all citizens, it now grows them in clone tanks. This is much less messy and disgusting than the old way and far less random. The Computer ensures every human citizen is genetically perfect in all respects. Improved by a program of mandatory hormone suppressants, human citizens are no longer troubled by the bestial urges of past generations.

The Computer's researchers in R&D continue to pioneer stunning advances in cloning technology. Earlier generations of citizens were grown in 'clone families' of six genetically identical siblings, all decanted from the tanks at the same time. When they died, their precious genetic heritage was lost to Alpha Complex. Today, thanks to advances in forced-growth cloning technology, The Computer's loyal servants in Technical Services can now produce new clone copies of any citizen at will.

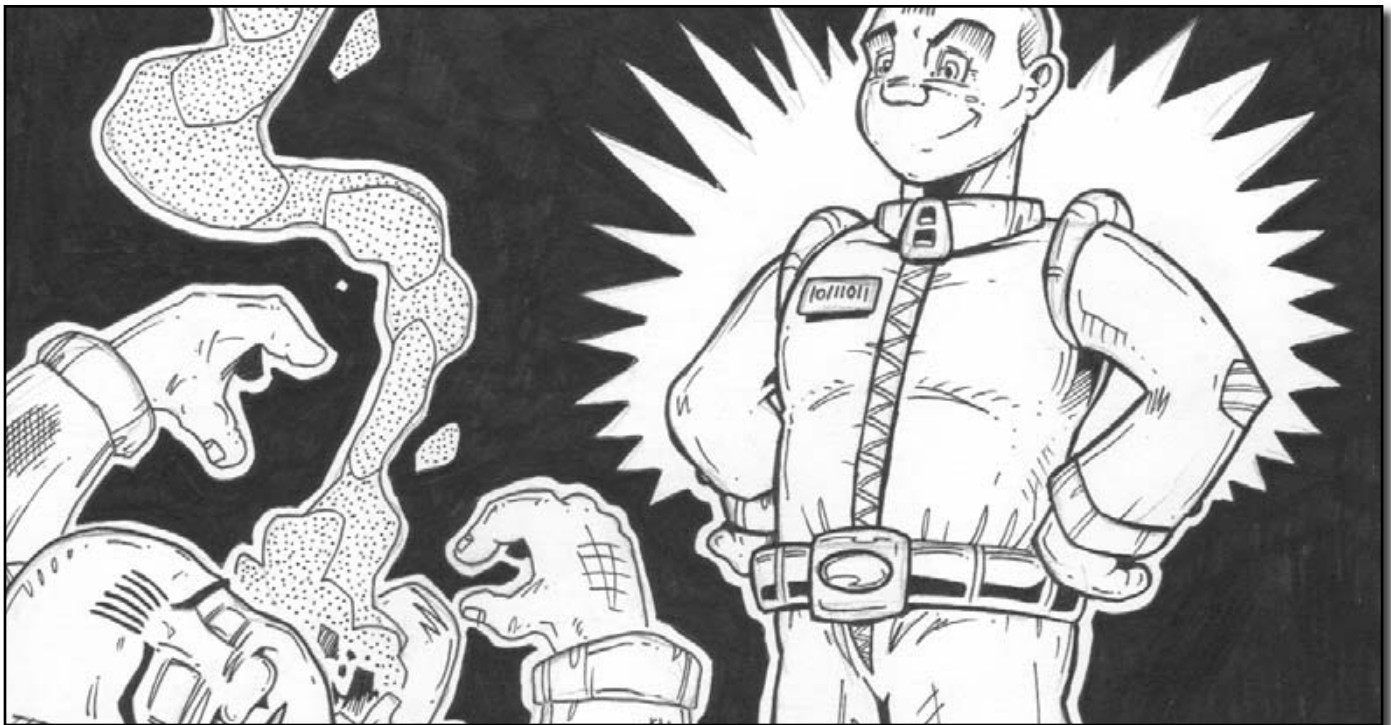
R&D's amazing **MemoMax** technology can copy and transfer the deceased citizen's memories to a new clone with speed and absolute accuracy.

Tech Services installed your MemoMax circuitry before you were decanted and it functions perfectly today.

The rare citizen of Alpha Complex who meets an untimely demise must sometimes wait for resources to become available to grow a new replacement body. In contrast, as a Troubleshooter you enjoy The Computer's fullest consideration.

Though you need not expect unusual hazards as you locate and terminate the last remaining vicious Communist enemies of Alpha Complex, The Computer has thoughtfully ordered for you five ready backup clones and a MemoMax **Constant Realtime Update Priority** link. The CRUP link ensures the highest priority for your return to action.

You may obtain more clone replacements, beyond the original five, from Tech Services at a regulated cost per set of six – though again, do not worry! Historically the number of Troubleshooters who have required more than five replacement clones is within acceptable margins, given prevalent situational circumstances.



'Death is an opportunity to get a snazzy fresh uniform.'

2. GREETINGS, RED CITIZEN!

Heroes and traitors

To maintain good order, The Computer has enlisted many loyal citizens like yourself. Those who serve with distinction are shining examples for all right-thinking people in Alpha Complex. In the ongoing 'Heroes of Our Complex' (HOOC) initiative The Computer periodically recognises and honours meritorious individuals of all Clearances. These lucky friends of The Computer see their smiling faces on evening vidshows, transtube loyalty posters and food containers.

For example, this month's HOOC honouree reduced waiting time by 22.3% on a per-line basis in her PLC subsector warehouse routing office through the simple yet ingenious expedient of subdividing the single line for each Security Clearance into three separate alphabetical lines indexed by weekday and devising a schedule designating visiting days for each alphabetical segment of customers. For this HOOC-worthy innovation, congratulations to [NAME DELETED as per IntSec corrective order following discovery of treasonous history].

Serve The Computer well and you too may join [NAME DELETED]!

The Computer also attends regretfully to the pervasive presence of traitors.

Traitors are everywhere! Though final crushing victory over Communist subversion is close at hand, the traitors' last shrill treason-laden gasps still endanger their innocent victims. Fight on, Troubleshooter, fight on for The Computer and all Alpha Complex!

Locate and apprehend or destroy **unregistered mutants**. They endanger human genetic purity and must be terminated or enlisted in our great cause.

Do not terminate *registered mutants*, innocent citizens who realised they possess, through no fault of their own, a treasonous mutant power. These unwitting traitors promptly reported their power to The Computer. In its wisdom and benevolence, The Computer forgives those who make a full confession and it permits registered mutants to live. However, The Computer requires registered mutants to wear a uniform with yellow stripes at all times. (**YELLOW** Clearance mutants wear a black-bordered yellow stripe.) Registered mutants are not subject to apprehension or termination when they use their powers. Encourage these former traitors to use their inhuman powers responsibly, for the good of all Alpha Complex, so they may someday overcome their unfortunate and terrible stigma.

Locate and apprehend or destroy **members of Secret Societies**. They are traitors, often terrorists, and must be brought to justice.

The existence of many Secret Societies is public knowledge. It is not technically illegal to discuss their treasonous doctrines and objectives, the better to enforce good order or promote greater sensitivity to danger. Remember, though, as a Troubleshooter you are The Computer's trusted emissary. Discourage ordinary citizens from frivolously discussing these dangerous organisations.

Due to past isolated incidents of lax security, unsupervised thoughts and poor hygiene, traitors have infiltrated Alpha Complex from the lowest to the highest levels. It may surprise you to learn traitors have even been identified on Troubleshooter teams like yours! Be vigilant in guarding against these rare but troubling incidents.

Very soon The Computer will finally defeat the forces of Communism, terrorism and subversion and guarantee a loyal, stress-free Alpha Complex. With constant alertness and unwavering commitment you can help ensure freedom from worry for all citizens. The Computer is counting on you and your fellow Troubleshooters to help make this Year 214 the last year you need ever worry about anything.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

3. How Paranoia Works

In **PARANOIA** you play a Troubleshooter who undertakes *missions* for The Computer. A mission is a storyline; a sequence of episodes that you and the other PCs experience. You might complete a mission in a single game session a few hours long or in a series of sessions.

Possibly you might not complete it at all. The other PCs may kill you first.

You are – we now cut to the chase – a traitor. You are a mutant and a member of a Secret Society. If your fellow Troubleshooters (the other players) find out, they will have you arrested or more likely shoot you. If you die, you will have to pay for a replacement clone body and this new body may have unfortunate drawbacks. The best way to avoid this fate is to shoot the other bastards first.

It is unwise to just start firing randomly. The Computer requires you to first obtain *evidence* of a target's treason. Otherwise

you yourself will be convicted of unjust accusations and probably terminated. If you present adequate evidence, The Computer will remand the convicted traitor to Internal Security or authorise you to terminate him. This authorisation may be retroactive.

Evidence can be documents, video records, incriminating materials or, most often, corroborating testimony from other Troubleshooters. Consider forming temporary alliances with other players to gain or create evidence against a common enemy.

Your goals as a Troubleshooter

The Computer assigns Troubleshooters several duties:

1. **Serve The Computer.**
2. **Locate and eliminate traitors,** including (but not limited to) Communists, Secret Society saboteurs and terrorists,

unregistered mutants, data pirates, WMD manufacturers and IR Marketeers.

3. **Investigate and eradicate corruption.**

4. **Remove dangers** to the good order and smooth operation of Alpha Complex.

Aside from these duties, your Troubleshooter has some personal goals. Many are universal among citizens of Alpha Complex. Most citizens prioritize them as follows:

1. *Survive!*
2. Rise in Security Clearance.
3. Get rich.
4. Further your Secret Society's goals. In addition to these standard goals, your Troubleshooter may have other goals not shared by all citizens:
5. *(Optional:)* Locate and protect fellow mutants who share your power.
6. *(Optional:)* Find Old Reckoning artifacts to collect or resell.
7. *(Optional:)* Escape from Alpha Complex to freedom Outdoors.
8. *(Optional:)* Overthrow The Computer (good luck!).

PARANOIA play styles

You can play **PARANOIA** in several different styles – as pure comedy, frenzied slapstick or tense and fearful dark satire. The GM's chosen play style affects some game rules, including the rigor The Computer requires for an accusation of treason. The GM will divulge the style he has chosen before play begins, if this suits his worthy purpose. This rulebook focuses on the **Classic** style of play. See the section starting on page 194 for discussions of **Straight** and **Zap** style play.

Classic: Made popular in previous editions of the game, this is rapid-fire slapstick. Troubleshooters seldom live long enough to advance far. Alpha Complex suffocates in bureaucracy, perpetually on the brink of collapse. 'Laurel and Hardy get jobs with the IRS on the original starship *Enterprise*.'

Straight (also called **Dark**): Fear, suspicion, striving for power and advancement, occasional hard-won successes in a scarily functional Alpha Complex. 'Yossarian from *Catch-22* gets a job in Orwell's Ministry of Truth.'

Zap (also called **Excessive** or **Frantic**): Pop-culture parodies, cartoon physics and frenzied firefights at the drop of a Bouncy Bubble Beverage can. Alpha Complex is generally irrelevant. 'Yosemite Sam gets a job in a factory that makes sledgehammers, nuclear warheads and glass unicorn figurines.'

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Note that none of these goals, in themselves, require your character to lie, conspire, suborn, plant evidence, bear false witness or commit assault against your fellow Troubleshooters. Still, in the right circumstances, all that can help.

Your character sheet

You have a *character sheet* that describes important game information about your character: skills, equipment and so on.

The first time your Gamemaster runs **PARANOIA**, and at other times as it suits his high purpose, he will probably provide character sheets with ready-made (*pregenerated*) Player Characters. These prefab PCs, ingeniously crafted by Famous Game Designers, are ideally suited to every possible need. Should the GM wish you to create your own Troubleshooter character, thank him excitedly for his kindness. Make a photocopy of the blank *character sheet* at the back of this book (page 199).

Mongoose Publishing grants you permission to photocopy this sheet for personal use only. Other uses are punishable by termination and erasure.

All your character's secret information is on the back of the character sheet. At the game table, consider covering up the sheet so devious rivals cannot peek. A screen of dice, rulebooks or snack bowls also guards against spying. However, we officially recommend against threats of physical violence.

With your photocopy and pencil in hand, proceed.

4. Creating Your Troubleshooter

To create your PC, photocopy the character sheet at the back of this book. Fill in the blanks on the sheet in pencil.

Certain aspects of your character are secret. Do not let the other players find out your secrets!

Some aspects of your character are known only to the GM.

You will now create your character. This will be lots of fun and not in the least anxiety-provoking. **Anxiety is forbidden.**

In the presence of your fellow players, be extremely careful to hide all confidential information, including your Secret skills, Secret Society and mutant power. **Hide nothing from the Gamemaster! Attempts to hide information from the GM earn immediate and dramatic reprisal!**

Be aware of other players' attempts to cheat and report such violations instantly to the Gamemaster. Relax in the confident assurance that the GM will chastise these cheaters appropriately. **Relaxation is mandatory! Failure to relax will be corrected instantly!**

Your Troubleshooter's character sheet records the following resources:
Name and gender
Skills, as well as optional specialties within those skills:
Three Action skills (Management, Stealth,

Violence)
Three Knowledge skills (Hardware, Software, Wetware)
Three Secret skills (classified as Uncommon, Unlikely and Unhealthy)
A vital specialty in Energy Weapons, under the Violence skill
Up to six optional common specialties and six narrow specialties in the Action and Knowledge skills
Employment in a Service Group, which grants you one mandatory Service Group specialty
A mutant power
Membership in one Secret Society
25 Perversity points
Two recognisable Tics of behaviour that can earn you more Perversity points
RED Security Clearance (the measure of how much The Computer trusts you)
Two attributes: Power and Access
Equipment – personal equipment you own yourself and equipment assigned by The Computer or its Service Groups
1,000 credits in savings (about a month of ordinary expenses)

You are authorised to read the explanation of all these resources in the following sections. All tables required for character creation are generously provided throughout the player section. Failure to study all relevant sections and tables is insubordination punishable by fines.

Name and gender

The text box describes the Alpha Complex naming scheme. So long as you conform to it, you may choose any name you wish. The Computer chooses citizen names at random, so your name need not sound plausible unless the GM requires it for his inestimable purpose.

Gender is not an issue in Alpha Complex. Low Clearance citizens (that is, the vast majority) take daily hormone suppressants that minimise physical differences between the genders and absolutely annihilate all romantic or physical interest. Failure to take hormone suppressants is treason.

Skills

When you were a Junior Citizen in the clone crèches, The Computer generously taught you to read and write and educated you in six broad areas of competence called *skills*, each rated 1 (low) to 20 (high). The skills are grouped in two categories of three skills each: *Action* skills and *Knowledge* skills.

Determine your character's ratings using one of these methods, according to your GM's instructions. Should the GM assign you one way to determine ratings and assign different ways to other players, you will of course congratulate his perceptive tailoring of the rules to your



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Your name

Citizens in Alpha Complex are named according to this scheme:
[Given name]-[clearance initial]-[home sector]-[clone number]

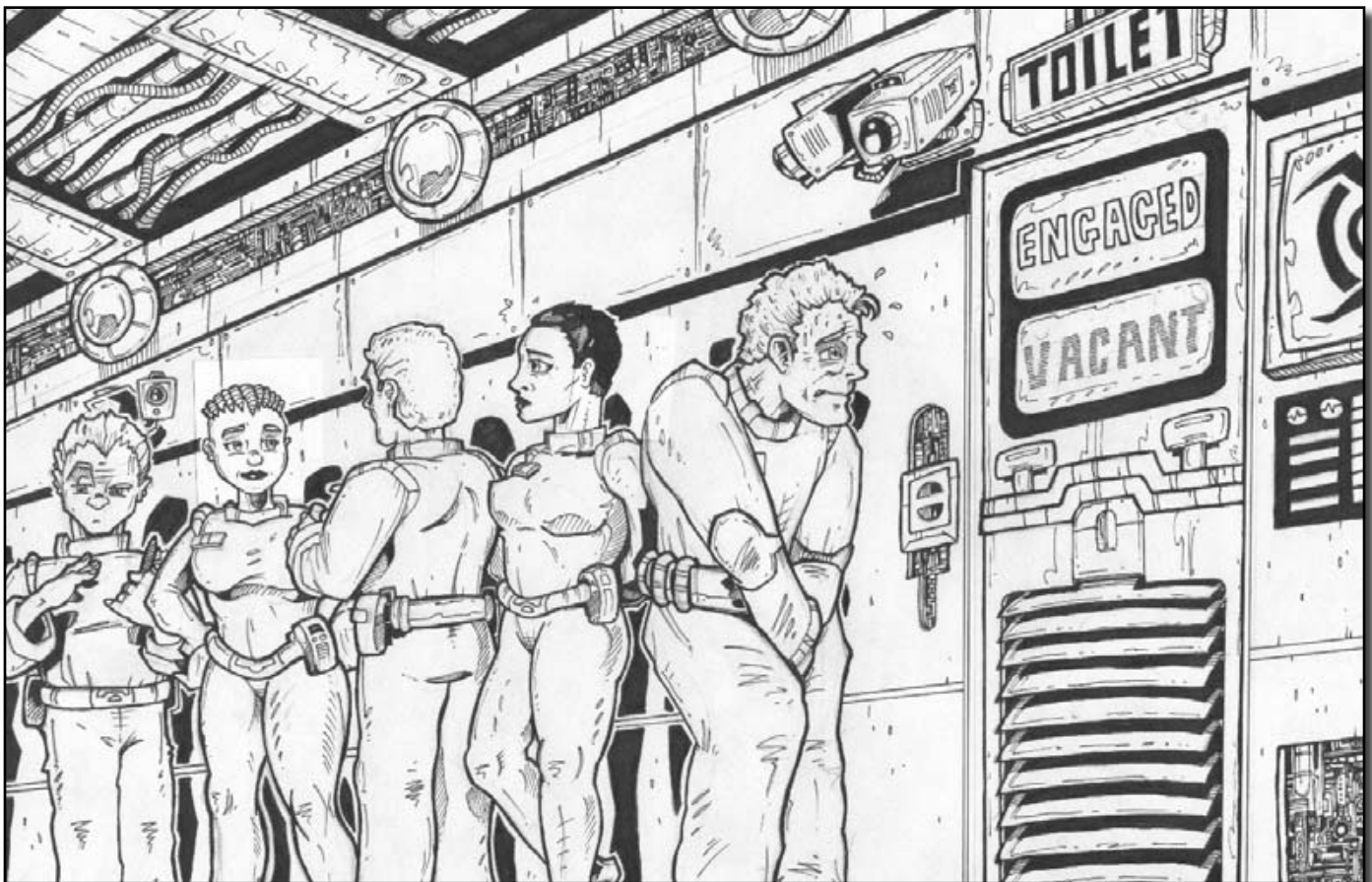
Given name: Some are drawn from databases of Old Reckoning names; others are wholly made up. Generally a single word; multiple-word personal names or names with internal capitals are discouraged but accepted. In some sectors The Computer selects names randomly; in others the teacherbots or human staff in the crèche assign names. *Examples:* Billy, Sue, Ken.

Clearance initial: The first letter of your ROYGBIV Security Clearance. INFRAREDs use no initial, to avoid confusion with INDIGOs. High Programmers use U for **ULTRAVIOLET**.
Examples: Billy (**INFRARED**), Sue-G, Ken-U.

Home sector: The three-letter code designating the sector where you grew up. Given the prevalence of duty reassignments, redistricting and sector-wide disasters, this is not always your assigned sector in later life.
Examples: Billy-BCN, Sue-G-XTU, Ken-U-RON.

Clone number: The number of your current clone incarnation. You start the game with the original You, colloquially called 'the Prime' and numbered 1. Each time you die, increase the clone number by 1.
Examples: Billy-BCN-1, Sue-G-XTU-4, Ken-U-RON-6.

Sabotage or software failure sometimes produces Junior Citizens with defective names: John-Paul-George-Ringo, Tra-LAH-LAH-LAH, Juan-2-B-U-LVA, 24-17-33-Hike. CPU procedures for renaming these citizens are intricate and lengthy; some citizens reach adulthood before gaining a correct name.



'Hormone suppressants have removed all gender distinctions from Alpha Complex.'

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individual needs. Write each rating on your character sheet.

Random: For each skill, roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled in half to get the rating (round fractions up). If your result is below 4, record 4 instead.

Custom: Each skill rating starts at 0 (zero) and you get 40 Skill Points you may allocate among the skills. You must allocate at least 4 points to each skill but you cannot put more than 10 in any skill. For each point you allocate, the skill's rating increases by 1.

(Your Troubleshooter also has three *Secret* skills but these are not determined the same way. See 'Secret skills' later in this chapter.)

The six Action and Knowledge skills are described later in this chapter. Each skill description includes a list of areas of concentration called *specialties*. To forestall bewilderment at these descriptions, you are first required to understand the nature of specialties.

Skill specialties and weaknesses

A **specialty** is something your character is particularly good at – a specific emphasis within a skill. When a situation comes up that calls for your specialty, you are required to use the specialty's rating instead of the governing skill's rating. Omitting to employ a pertinent specialty in The Computer's service is insubordination.

Specialties can be *vital*, *common* or *narrow*. All Troubleshooters have one mandatory **vital** specialty: Energy Weapons – i.e., lasers. **Add 4 to your Violence skill rating to get your Energy Weapons specialty rating.** Write the Energy Weapons specialty and its rating under your Violence skill.

A **common** specialty is useful in situations that crop up frequently in Troubleshooter missions – for instance, Projectile Weapons, Bootlicking or Surveillance. Common specialties are listed after their governing skill. **Add 4**

Character example: 1

The GM grants you the privilege of designing a **PARANOIA** character. After thanking the GM for his kindness, you decide to name your character Ben-R-GOX-1. Ben is Clearance **RED**, like all starting characters and is on clone #1 (that is, he is a Prime).

You choose to roll randomly for your six skills. For Management you roll a 20-sided die and get 15. Dividing 15 in half and rounding up, you get Ben-R's Management skill of 8. Not bad!

For Ben-R's next skill, Stealth, you roll a miserable 2, which would give Ben-R Stealth 1. However, for any result below 4, you record 4 instead. Ben-R has Stealth 4.

In the same way, you roll 1d20 and halve the results to get Ben-R's other skills: Violence 5, Hardware 7, Software 10 (!), Wetware 5.

Ben-R has a vital specialty in Energy Weapons (that is, lasers). You add 4 to his Violence skill of 5 to get his Energy Weapons specialty rating of 9.

to the governing skill's rating to get the common specialty's rating. For instance, if you have a Management skill rating of 5 and you take Bootlicking (a Management specialty), your Bootlicking rating is (5 + 4=) 9.

Common specialties are listed shortly. You may also invent your own common specialty with the GM's approval.

You are authorised to select up to **six common specialties** at your discretion. To take a specialty in any skill, write it under the skill's name. You can assign up to **three** of your six allotted common specialties to a single skill. You are never required to take a common specialty but refusing The Computer's generosity can be construed as insubordination.

When you take a common specialty, you must also assign another common specialty in the same skill as your character's compensating **weakness**. A weakness is a particular blind spot; your area of incompetence. Write the weakness or weaknesses under the specialty. **Each weakness rating is 1.**

If, during play, it turns out your weakness does not limit you as often as the specialty benefits you, the fair-minded GM may assign you additional weaknesses to right the balance.

Your vital Energy Weapons specialty does not inflict a compensating weakness.

A **narrow** specialty affects a single specific target character or small group (but not your fellow Troubleshooters or The Computer), a certain piece of equipment (not a type of equipment but one particular item) or a highly specific situation. Examples appear after each skill. You are encouraged to make up your own narrow specialties. **Add 6 to the governing skill's rating to get the narrow specialty's rating.** A narrow specialty doesn't give you a corresponding weakness.

Your beginning character has 'slots' for **six narrow specialties, one in each skill**. Do not select them now; keep these slots *open* (undefined). During play, when a situation arises that seems to call for a narrow specialty, you may ask the GM's permission to use one of your open slots for that specialty. If the GM lets you put the suggested specialty in that slot, you have used up the open slot and keep that specialty thereafter. After you become familiar with **PARANOIA**, you can define any or all your narrow specialties when you create a Troubleshooter.

Action Skills

The **Action** group includes Management, Stealth and Violence skills. Use these to affect or perceive the world and to



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interact with other people, bots and The Computer.

Action skills may overlap (cover the same area of competence) in certain circumstances but are not intended to overlap routinely.

Management

Nonviolent, nontechnical interaction with other characters that are aware of your presence. Management actions include bootlicking, bribery, confidence games, fast talk, intimidation, interrogation, oratory and all other verbal actions. Management also includes checking and correcting another character's hygiene, appearance or demonstrations of loyalty.

Management is also your generic ability to behave properly or make others behave improperly.

Management does not typically cover anything requiring specialised or technical knowledge, such as medical or psychological diagnoses or equipment calibration or repair; these actions require Knowledge skills.

Bootlicking: How to ingratiate yourself with superiors.

Chutzpah: Getting others to accept doubtful statements through confident assertion, bluffing and unmitigated gall.

Con Games: Hoodwinking a citizen or bot through fast talk, spurious logic and persuasion. This isn't physical sleight of hand (see Sleight of Hand under Stealth).

Hygiene: Maintaining cleanliness in yourself, your surroundings, your teammates and innocent passersby.

Interrogation: Extracting useful information from Commie mutant scum.

Intimidation: This does not exactly ingratiate you with your inferiors but it gets their cooperation.

Moxie: Streetwise smarts; canny assessment of a person, situation or statement.

Oratory: How to get a *bunch* of people to do what you want.

Example narrow Management specialties: Pump My Service Group Office Mates for Gossip, Suck Up to Boss Judd-G-

LKN, Work the 'Cup and Algae Pellet' Swindle.

Stealth

General sneakiness; any nonverbal attempt to detect or to physically evade detection, conceal physical objects or materials or locate them, misdirect another character's attention or avoid being misdirected. Stealth includes security and surveillance.

Stealth skill describes more than skulking silently down corridors; it also measures sensitivity to things you're not supposed to perceive. Thus Stealth is your generic alertness and perception skill.

Stealth does not typically cover subliminal messages or sabotage of equipment; these require a Knowledge skill.

Concealment: Hiding stuff on your person or in your surroundings; also, spotting stuff others have hidden.

Disguise: Wearing a higher Clearance jumpsuit or false moustache without looking idiotic.

Scam Radar: Sensing tricks, traps and surveillance.

Security Systems: Jiggering locks and alarms.

Shadowing: Following someone without being noticed.

Sleight of Hand: Palming and pocketing small things without being noticed.

Sneaking: Moving around without being followed or noticed.

Surveillance: How to bug things. How to debug things.

Example narrow Stealth specialties: Palm Pharmatherapy Pills, Leave My Workplace Undetected Through The Floor Air Conditioning Vent, Spot When the Malfunctioning Security Camera in My Quarters is Working.

Violence

Physical, nonverbal attempts to hurt or kill characters or destroy or break objects. Violence includes all Weapon skills plus demolition. The vital specialty Energy Weapons falls under the Violence skill.

Violence is your generic physical activity skill, including running, jumping and such fiddly activities as lockpicking, juggling and cutting the red wire just three seconds before detonation.

(Though this skill is named 'Violence,' as opposed to, say, 'Physical,' you must not assume that gratuitous violent behaviour is typical or even unavoidable in Alpha Complex. This idea would demoralise your fellow Troubleshooters. **Attempting to demoralise your fellow Troubleshooters is treason!**)

Violence does not typically cover sabotage of equipment; such subtle actions require Knowledge skills.

Agility: Rapid or balanced movement, gymnastics, jumping.

Demolition: How to use TNT without killing yourself. At Clearances below **GREEN** this skill is treasonous.

Energy Weapons: Hitting someone with a laser, sonic weapon or blaster. This is a **vital specialty**. You cannot take Energy Weapons as a weakness and it does not count as one of your six common specialties.

Field Weapons: Flamethrowers, gauss guns, tanglers and the ever-popular plasma generator.

Fine Manipulation: Lockpicking, watchmaking, cutting the red wire one second before detonation.

Hand Weapons: Hitting someone with a force sword, neurowhip or truncheon or with primitive weapons.

Projectile Weapons: Hitting someone with a slugthrower, cone rifle or other aimed weapon that uses ammunition.

Thrown Weapons: Hitting someone with a grenade, brick or rock.

Unarmed Combat: Hitting someone when you don't have a hand, energy, projectile, thrown or vehicular weapon.

Vehicular Combat: Hitting someone with a weapon mounted on a vehicle.

Example narrow Violence specialties: Wield My Trusty Truncheon 'Nora,' Hit Gordon-VLK's Funny Bone in That Way He Hates, Eat Entire Bag of Algae Chips in Four Seconds.

Knowledge Skills

The **Knowledge** group includes Hardware, Software and Wetware skills. Use these to determine if your Troubleshooter knows a given scientific fact or technical procedure; how to operate, maintain, calibrate and

4. CREATING YOUR TROUBLESHOOTER

repair stuff; or how to sabotage your companions' equipment.

All three Knowledge skills overlap routinely. For instance, suppose you want to 'adjust' a medbot so it detects your team leader as a monstrous, tentacled alien invader. This could involve Hardware (adjusting biosensor voltages), Software (inserting a new variable in the bot's interpretation subroutines) or Wetware (altering the bot's biosensor settings). You are authorised to try to convince the Gamemaster a skill applies if you can offer a plausible reason.

Hardware

Mechanical or electronic devices and inorganic materials, including laser and projectile weapons, armour, battle suits, bots, autocars and other vehicles, monitors, electrical equipment, power generation, many kinds of engineering (chemical, electronic, habitat, mechanical, nuclear), clone tanks, actual tanks and so on.

Bot Ops and Maintenance: How to operate and fix docbots, guardbots/warbots, jackobots, scrubots and vehicle autopilots.

Chemical Engineering: Lots of uses for this but somehow PCs always want to use it to make explosives.

Electronic Engineering: How to string together circuits and microprocessors.

Habitat Engineering: Knowledge of the air, communication, transport, power, water and waste systems. Mighty handy when you need to find a ventilation shaft to escape incoming fire.

Mechanical Engineering: How to make really neat Rube Goldberg-type contraptions.

Nuclear Engineering: How to operate a reactor without flooding half the sector with radioactive waste.

Operate Heavy Machinery: How to operate industrial machinery without losing more limbs than normal.

Vehicle Ops and Maintenance: How to use and repair all vehicles: autocars, crawlers, flybots, copters and Vulturecraft.

Weapon and Armour Maintenance: Sabotaging others' weapons and armour and keeping yours from being sabotaged.

Example narrow Hardware specialties: Increase My Lucky Laser Pistol's Power, Get Barracks Vending Machine to Stop Making That Funny Noise.

Software

Anything data- or software-related, including bot and device programming, operating systems, communication protocols, data search and analysis, safe software, software viruses and worms, confession-booth lie-detector programs and (at the highest skill levels and Security Clearances) even the inner workings of The Computer itself. Some of these are treasonous at your Clearance.

Bot Programming: Revising bot instructions.

C-Bay: Getting the best price buying and selling at Alpha Complex auctions.

Cryptography: Encoding or decoding messages.

Data Analysis: How to understand Computer-generated stuff.

Data Search: Finding something useful using The Computer.

Financial Systems: How to transfer credits safely for legitimate or criminal purposes.

Hacking: Breaking into The Computer's systems. Really, what could go wrong? Treasonous at Clearances below **GREEN**.

Multicorder Operations: Adjusting the visual records on a multicorder video camera.

Operating Systems: Revising MemoMax clone backup tech. Rewriting The Computer's instructions. Treasonous at Clearances below **BLUE**.

Vehicle Programming: Revising vehicle instructions.

Example narrow Software specialties: Soothe Autocar SPD-1's Jangled Brain, Speak in Weird Voice That Keeps Confession Booth NDF-445 Lie Detector From Catching Me.

Wetware

Biological and organic topics and devices, including health, bioweapons, disease, drugs, first aid, biochemical therapy, cooking, poisons, bacteria and organic viruses, cloning procedures, bioscience engineering, survival Outdoors and identification and understanding of specimens from Outdoors.

Biosciences: Knowing what's likely to mutate you and how.

Bioweapons: Engineering your own Black Death or weaponised anthrax. Treasonous at Clearances below **BLUE**.

Cloning: Repairing and operating the tanks that grow new and backup citizens. Operating MemoMax backup devices so the new clone remembers his name and boot size.

Medical: How to heal the injured and cure the sick, or ensure they don't heal or get cured.

Outdoor Life: Telling a tree from a weed, or a bird from an elephant, when most citizens have never heard of these.

Pharmatherapy: Ensuring wakefulness, sleepiness, happiness or any other mental state through the application of little pills.

Psychotherapy: Recognising insanity; helping others recover from it or descend further into it.

Suggestion: Biochemical and psychological techniques of subliminal persuasion.

Example narrow Wetware specialties: Make Hot Fun Into Sticky Paste, Make Hot Fun Into Acidic Solvent, Make Hot Fun Into Low-Yield Explosive.

Service group

At the time you were decanted, your friend The Computer designated you for a particular Service Group. When you reached age 14 and left your clone crèche, you worked at one of that group's subsections as an **INFRARED** line worker. You worked there for years before The Computer recruited you as a Troubleshooter. You still work at your assigned duties when you are not on a



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Character example: 2

You choose Ben-R-GOX-1's six common specialties. Because he's good at Software, you put three specialties under that skill: Data Analysis, Data Search and Financial Systems. Each has a rating equal to Ben-R's Software skill (10) plus 4, or 14.

Because you selected three specialties in Software, you must take three corresponding weaknesses in the same skill. You choose Bot Programming, Operating Systems and Vehicle Programming as your weaknesses. Each rating is 1.

For Ben-R's other common specialties you choose Moxie (a Management specialty); Security Systems (Stealth); and Projectile Weapons (Violence). To get their ratings you add 4 to each specialty's governing skill. So Ben-R has a Moxie rating of 12 (4 added to his Management rating of 8), Security Systems 8 (Stealth rating of 4 + 4) and Projectile Weapons 9 (Violence 5 + 4).

For Ben-R's three compensating weaknesses – one each in Management, Stealth and Violence – you choose Intimidation, Disguise and Unarmed Combat. In each, Ben-R's rating is 1.

For now you decide to specify only one of Ben-R's six narrow specialties: Jigger My Barrack's Cash Machine to Give Extra Credits. This is a Software specialty, so Ben-R adds 6 to his Software skill to get the narrow specialty rating of 16.

Central Processing: Security Systems (St), Electronic Engineering (H), Bot Programming (So), Data Analysis (So), Financial Software (So), Data Search (So), Vehicle Programming (So).

HPD&MC: Bootlicking (M), Chutzpah (M), Con Games (M), Moxie (M), Bot Ops and Maintenance (H), Multicorder Operations (So), Pharmatherapy (W), Medical (W).

Internal Security: Interrogation (M), Intimidation (M), Security Systems (St), Surveillance (St), Energy Weapons (V), Hand Weapons (V), Unarmed Combat (V).

PLC: Chutzpah (M), Con Games (M); Bot Ops and Maintenance (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Operate Heavy Machinery (H), Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H), Data Search (So), Biosciences (W).

Power Services: Data Analysis (So), Data Search (So), Chemical Engineering (H), Electronic Engineering (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Mechanical Engineering (H), Nuclear Engineering (H).

R&D: Chemical Engineering (H), Mechanical Engineering (H), Nuclear Engineering (H), Bot Programming (So), Vehicle Programming (So), Bioweapons (W), Cloning (W).

Tech Services: Chemical Engineering (H), Electronic Engineering (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H), Operate Heavy Machinery (H), Bot Programming (So), Vehicle Programming (So), Pharmatherapy (W).

Service Group

Roll 1d20 to determine your Service Group.

1-2	Armed Forces
3-4	Central Processing Unit
5-6	HPD & Mind Control
7-8	Internal Security*
9-10	Internal Security (Service Group)

mission and not currently dead. In this way Troubleshooting is like volunteer firefighting, just not voluntary and with more firefights.

To determine your Service Group, roll 1d20 and consult the Service Group table on Page 19. Find your die-roll on the left side of the table; the name printed on the same line is the Service Group you are assigned to.

Service Group specialties

At your job, you were trained in one common skill specialty. After thanking The Computer for its customary generosity, you will choose your Service Group specialty from the following list. **Choosing a Service Group common specialty is mandatory. Any attempt to choose a Service Group specialty outside your Service Group's authorised list will be answered with appropriate countermeasures.**

Your chosen specialty must enhance your character in exactly one of these two permitted ways:

New and improved: From your Service Group's authorised list you choose a new 'free' skill specialty different from, and in addition to, the six you (optionally) chose earlier. The new specialty works like other common specialties, with a rating 4 higher than the governing skill. You do not suffer a compensating weakness for your new Service Group specialty.

Bumped: You instead choose to enhance one of the six common specialties you chose earlier. The enhanced specialty must be on your Service Group's authorised list. Add 4 to the enhanced specialty's rating (maximum 18). The enhancement has no effect on existing skill weaknesses.

For your convenience Service Group specialties are labelled with their governing skill (**M**=Management, **St**=Stealth, **V**=Violence, **H**=Hardware, **So**=Software, **W**=Wetware).

Armed Forces: Demolition (V), Energy Weapons (V), Hand Weapons (V), Projectile Weapons (V), Thrown Weapons (V), Unarmed Combat (V); Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H).

4. CREATING YOUR TROUBLESHOOTER

- 11-13 Production, Logistics & Commissary
- 14-15 Power Services
- 16-17 Research & Design
- 18-19 Technical Services
- 20 Industrial spy or saboteur**

* Write 'Internal Security' on the back of your character sheet. Roll again for another Service Group. You are a spy for Internal Security in that group. The second group is your 'cover', the group everyone thinks you work for. You learn a Service Group specialty from Internal Security, not your cover group.

** You've been assigned to spy on or sabotage another Service Group. Roll twice more, the first roll determines your actual Service Group, the second determines the group that you are spying on/sabotaging.

Mutant power

Due to treasonous sabotage of The Computer's otherwise faultless cloning process, certain clones are decanted with innate mutations that grant them inhuman or superhuman abilities. Because these genetic impurities present an uncontrollable threat to The Computer's hard-won social order, possession of a mutant power is treason punishable by execution.

Unknown (probably) to your fellow Troubleshooters, you possess a mutant power. You have known about it for some time but kept it secret from everyone.

The GM may determine your mutant power and may decide not to tell you. If he asks you to determine your own mutant power, thank him profusely and consult the Mutant Powers table nearby. Roll 1d20 and find the number you rolled in the top row, to determine which of the three sub-tables you use – Deviant Powers, Dangerous Powers and Disgusting Powers. Next, roll 1d20 again and match the number you rolled on left column of the Mutant Powers table. The mutant power on the same line in the appropriate sub-table is your power. Write the power name on the secret part of your character sheet, protected from other players' prying eyes.

During the game, when you want to use your mutant power, tell the Gamemaster – preferably in secret conference, via note or prearranged signal, by waving coded flags and so on. To learn about your mutant power, ask the Gamemaster.

Registering Your Mutation

Some mutants have patriotically registered their power with The Computer's Internal Security Service Group. After you know what your power does, decide whether or not to register it. However, if your power is **Machine Empathy**, *don't reveal it!* The Computer considers that power so dangerous it immediately executes anyone who possesses it.

A registered mutant is not executed just for being a mutant. If you register your mutation, you can use your power whenever you like without being accused of treason. However, you must wear a

yellow stripe on your uniform at all times (citizens of **YELLOW** Clearance wear a stripe with black borders). As a registered mutant you will certainly face anti-mutant prejudice. Registered mutants get passed by for promotions, are the butt of jokes in Service Group advertising and – most important for your purposes – are frequently the handiest scapegoat when anything goes wrong.

Registered mutants are second-class citizens, if that. The Computer tolerates you and assigns you to Troubleshooter teams in hopes of helping their odds. The Computer assigns responsibility for your safety to the Team Leader. Your fellow citizens can't just shoot you without the Leader's permission, or they risk getting recycled for destroying The Computer's 'equipment'. They can't execute you unless they can *prove* you did something treasonous. Yet citizens still hate and despise you publicly, though members of certain Secret Societies may look on you with pity.

Mutant powers table

	Deviant (1-10)	Dangerous (11-15)	Disgusting (16-20)
1	Not A Mutant*	Corrosion	Levitation
2	Charm	Electroshock	Matter Eater
3	Detect Mutant Power	Energy Field	Polymorphism
4	Empathy	Mental Blast	Slippery Skin
5	Hypersenses	Pyrokinesis	Regeneration
6	Uncanny Luck	Telekinesis	Vampire
7	Puppeteer	X-Ray Vision	Shrinking
8	Ventriloquist	Absorption	Transmutation
9	Bureaucratic Intuition	Adrenalin Control	Growth
10	Death Simulation	Bouncy	Chameleon
11	Deep Thought	Haze	Desolidity
12	Mechanical Intuition	Magnetise	Toxic Metabolism
13	Push Mutant Power	Cryokinesis	Adhesive Skin
14	Doom Magnet	Teleportation	Rubbery Bones
15	Psychic Flash	Laser Reflection	Stench
16	Evil Twin	Hyperspeed	Stretchy
17	Surveillance Intuition	Infra-vision	Acidic Blood
18	Empathic Liar	Invisibility	Ink Spray
19	Copy Mutant Power	Energy Suppression	Hurricane Lungs
20	Machine Empathy**	Machine Empathy**	Machine Empathy**

* Rejoice, citizen! Your genetics are pure! You have no mutant taint... that you know of.

** Having this mutant power is grounds for immediate and lasting execution.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Secret society

Long ago The Computer wisely started several of Alpha Complex's Secret Societies as harmless outlets for citizens' repressed urges toward insubordination. Other, more dangerous Secret Societies formed independently or as offshoots from the originals. Most of the societies developed many feuding factions, all competing for resources or even locked in internecine warfare. These societies survive today and though talking about them is insubordination, their existence is widely known among citizens of all Clearances.

Because even the oldest Secret Societies now evince dangerous ideas of self-determination, The Computer has rightly condemned all Secret Society membership as treason punishable by execution. This is unfortunate for you, because you are a Secret Society member.

All Secret Societies recruit aggressively among the **INFRARED** labourers of Alpha Complex. One such society recruited you several years ago and you are now familiar with its goals and doctrines. You know its friends, enemies, methods and possibly even a few contacts. Because you recognise your society as a potentially powerful tool for

your advancement, you work sincerely and aggressively to further its goals.

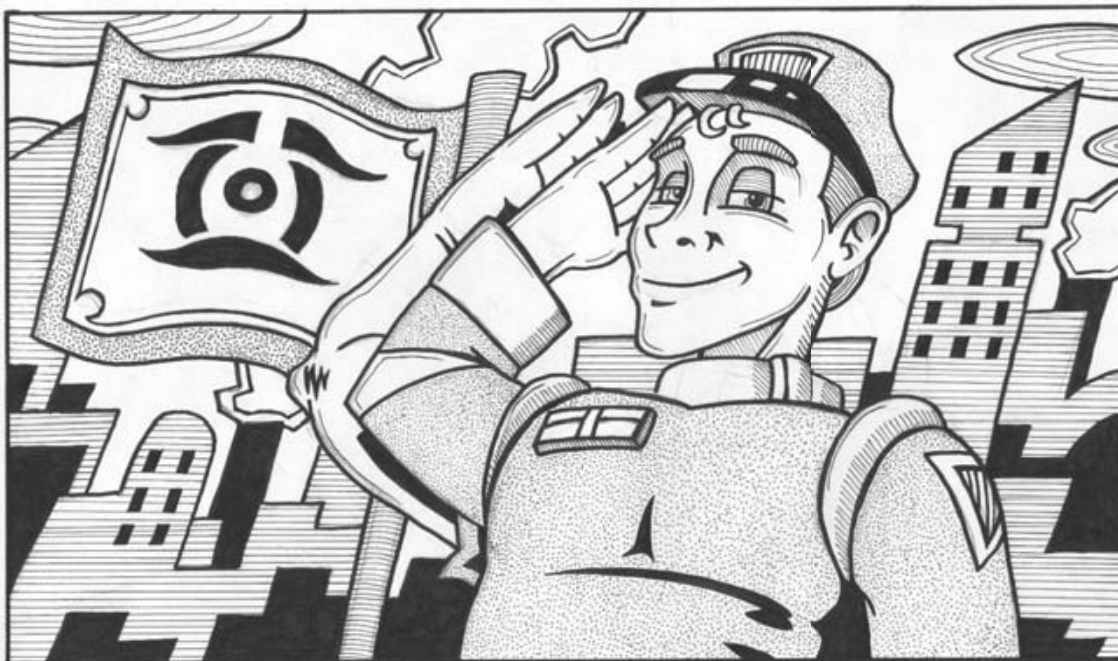
The Gamemaster may tell you your Secret Society or may ask you to roll a die to determine it. In this case, thank him for his graciousness and consult the Secret Society table appropriate to your Service Group. Roll 1d20 and find the number you rolled in the left column of the table. The society on the same line is your affiliation. Write it on the secret part of your character sheet.

If you roll an entry with an asterisk, consult the table key below. To learn about your Secret Society, ask the Gamemaster.

Character example: 3

For Ben-R-GOX-1's Service Group you roll 1d20 and consult the Service Group tables opposite. You roll 5 – Central Processing Unit. Excellent! With Ben-R's strong Software skill, this should be a good match. You decide against choosing a new specialty. Instead, you take this opportunity to bump up your existing Financial Software specialty by 4, from 14 to 18 (the maximum allowed). Ben-R is a finance wizard!

For Ben-R's mutant power you roll 1d20 and get the Dangerous table. You roll a 3, Energy Field – whatever that is. You write it on the secret side of your character sheet.



'Registered mutants! The few, the proud, the weird!'

REGISTER YOUR MUTATION!
TODAY!

4. CREATING YOUR TROUBLESHOOTER

Armed Forces

1-3	Anti-Mutant
4-6	Death Leopard
7-9	Frankenstein Destroyers
10-12	PURGE
13	Communists
14	FCCC-P
15	Free Enterprise
16	Pro Tech
17	Psion
18	Illuminati*
19	Other (see GM for details)
20	Undercover agent**

Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC)

1-5	Free Enterprise
6-9	Humanists
10-11	Mystics
12-13	Romantics
14	Communists
15	Pro Tech
16	Psion
17	Sierra Club
18	Illuminati*
19	Other (see GM for details)
20	Undercover agent**

Central Processing Unit

1-4	Computer Phreaks
5-8	Corpore Metal
9-10	FCCC-P
11-12	Sierra Club
13	Anti-Mutant
14	Communists
15	Pro Tech
16	Psion
17	PURGE
18	Illuminati*
19	Other (see GM for details)
20	Undercover agent**

Power Services

1-2	Computer Phreaks
3-4	Death Leopard
5-6	FCCC-P
7-8	Frankenstein Destroyers
9-10	Free Enterprise
11-12	Mystics
13-14	Pro Tech
15-16	PURGE
17	Communists
18	Illuminati*
19	Other (see GM for details)
20	Undercover agent**

HPD & Mind Control

1-2	Anti-Mutant
3-4	FCCC-P
5-7	Humanists
8-11	Romantics
12-13	Sierra Club
14	Communists
15	Mystics
16	Psion
17	PURGE
18	Illuminati*
19	Other (see GM for details)
20	Undercover agent**

Research & Design (R&D)

1-3	Computer Phreaks
4-6	Corpore Metal
7-9	Pro Tech
10-12	Psion
13-15	PURGE
16	FCCC-P
17	Communists
18	Illuminati*
19	Other (see GM for details)
20	Undercover agent**

Internal Security

1-3	Anti-Mutant
4-6	Death Leopard
7-9	FCCC-P
10-12	Frankenstein Destroyers
13	Communists
14	Free Enterprise
15	Pro Tech
16	Psion
17	PURGE
18	Illuminati*
19	Other (see GM for details)
20	Undercover agent**

Technical Services

1-2	Computer Phreaks
3-4	Corpore Metal
5-6	Death Leopard
7-8	Frankenstein Destroyers
9-10	Mystics
11-12	Pro Tech
13-14	Psion
15-16	Sierra Club
17	Communists
18	Illuminati*
19	Other (see GM for details)
20	Undercover agent**

Secret Society table key

* Write 'Illuminati' on the secret section of your character sheet. Roll the die again to find a second, 'cover' society. You are an undercover agent for the Illuminati in this society.

** You've been assigned to spy on another society. Roll twice more. Your first roll determines who you're spying for, the second whom you're spying on. If you roll a 20 again, the group you're spying on assigns you to spy on a third society. Roll enough 20s and you could be spying on the entire Complex. Good luck keeping your cover stories straight.

Secret Society degree

Like other institutions in Alpha Complex, most Secret Societies are strictly hierarchical. The higher your degree (rank) in your society, the more you can exploit your connections to procure restricted equipment or information, gain contacts, borrow funds or many other kinds of perks. Your Secret Society designates your degree by a number from 1 (low) to 20 (high). This isn't (just) an abstract game rating but a literal status number tracked by your superiors in the society. Generally the higher your degree number, the greater the authority you can exert over those of lower degrees. However, this varies; in some societies, high degree may indicate only prestige or, worse, the magnitude of your administrative drudgework.

Roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled by 4 (round fractions up). The result is your degree.

Secret skills

Contacts in your Secret Society have taught you things The Computer's teachbots never mentioned. These areas of knowledge or practice, not covered by the Action and Knowledge skills, are **Secret** skills.

Secret skills are grouped in these categories:

Uncommon in Alpha Complex but not necessarily treasonous: Swimming, Rock Climbing and other Outdoors skills, craft



TROUBLESHOOTERS

skills such as cooking or glassblowing, conceivably (among citizens whose hormone suppressants have worn off) even seduction. Knowing how to drive a non-automated vehicle is Uncommon; each vehicle type is a different skill. To justify your character's Uncommon skill, offer the GM a convincing rationale. ('I became a bookbinder to repair a High Programmer's treasonous Old Reckoning book collection.')

Unlikely to figure significantly in a mission: Knitting and other hobby skills, Whistling, Teela-O-MLY Trivia, Video Games and so on.

Unhealthy: Treasonous skills such as Communist Propaganda, Digital Image Manipulation, Filesharing, foreign languages and so on; knowledge of Old Reckoning Cultures; criminal skills (Twitchtalk, Fraudulent Accounting, Gambling); also skills legally available only at a higher clearance than yours (highly advanced science or mathematics and so on).

Unless the GM informs you otherwise, you are required to choose exactly **one Secret skill in each category** (Uncommon, Unlikely, Unhealthy). The GM, that paragon of fairness, can veto your choices or assign them to a different category. Never choose something like 'Unerringly Destroy Fellow Troubleshooters' or you risk alienating the GM's tender affections.

Write the skills on the secret side of your character sheet. For Secret skills not on the regular non-secret list, roll 1d20; the result is the skill's rating. For specialties from the regular non-secret list, like Demolition, determine their rating normally from the governing skill's rating. If you already have that specialty or weakness, do not change the existing rating.

If your Secret Society requires you to learn a specific Secret skill, it appears in **bold print** on the society's line in the table opposite. Skills not in bold print are recommended but not mandatory. If you do not like a recommended skill, pick one from another society or invent your own skill and submit it to the GM for approval. If you are undercover, learn your cover society's skills.

Perversity points and Tics

You, the player (as opposed to your character), start play with 25 *Perversity points*. You can use these points for many desirable things explained later. You now have a valuable opportunity to earn bonus Perversity points! You will of course embrace this chance with a joyous heart.

You may inflict one or two Tics on your character; examples of your character's individual quirks and habits.

A Tic is any *obvious and recognisable* behaviour or condition that seldom, if ever, directly affects the game – for example, humming absently, twiddling your thumbs when you are nervous or twitching when anyone mentions 'the sewers'. Perhaps you acquired your Tic while working at your Service Group or because of your mutant power. For instance, if you worked all day for years shuffling rods of enriched uranium from one Power Services reactor to another, wouldn't you expect to have an odd rash or persistent sores or faintly glowing hair?

A Tic is never secret. Anyone in your presence for more than a few minutes observes it. The Tic does not inhibit your ability to do anything useful; it's just a way strangers might describe you. A database query for some generic description like 'tall male Troubleshooter, black hair, crewcut, shifty features' would bring up more hits than a Google search for 'sex'. A description that includes a few Tics ('He had bow legs and a monitor-shaped mole on his jaw, he snuffled through his nose and when I offered him a bag of algae chips he screamed like a girl') could pull you out of a police line-up with 99% accuracy.

Possibly you see no worth in this notion. Why, then, take a Tic? First, it helps you roleplay a distinctive character. If that doesn't motivate you, consider this: whenever a Tic comes up in play in an entertaining or painful fashion, you will be rewarded with Perversity points.

Tics in play

Tics are your roleplaying cues. When you play your Tics effectively, in a fun and entertaining way, the GM may award you a Perversity point bonus. He may reward you for a particularly fun Tic use during the game but more often he will make the award at the end of a play session. **Beware!** Boring or repetitive Tics won't earn you points, no matter how many times you sniff your underarms or jerk your head to the right.

Security clearance

With its customary wisdom The Computer has arranged all Alpha Complex society using an unbreakable system of Security Clearances. The Security Clearances are ranked by colour, low to high: INFRARED, RED, ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, INDIGO, VIOLET, ULTRAVIOLET. **INFRARED** Clearance citizens wear black and **ULTRAVIOLET** citizens (also known as *High Programmers*) wear white. Everyone else wears clothing of the colour appropriate for their Clearance. Rooms and corridors in Alpha Complex are painted in varying hues of their Clearance colours. To pass through a corridor or enter a room beyond your Clearance is treason.

Your Clearance measures nothing less than The Computer's expressed trust in you. If The Computer trusts you not at all (as with most citizens), you are a common **INFRARED**. At the other extreme, if The Computer trusts you to revise the very code it runs on, you are a High Programmer, Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**. All citizens in Alpha Complex, whatever their current rank, began as INFRAREDs. As the game starts, you have been promoted from the teeming masses of INFRAREDs to Clearance **RED**. The Computer encourages all citizens to aspire to higher Clearance, so they may serve Alpha Complex more effectively.

Armed with The Computer's trust, those of high Clearance can exercise great authority over everyone of lower Clearance. Thus some selfish individuals

4. CREATING YOUR TROUBLESHOOTER

Society	Uncommon	Unlikely	Unhealthy*
Anti-Mutant	Power Studies	Comic Book Trivia	Twitchtalk
Computer Phreaks	Cash Hacking	Jargon	Hacking, programming skills
Communists	Demolition	Tractor Maintenance	Propaganda*
Corpore Metal	Cyborging	Botspotting	Bioweapons
Death Leopard	Demolition	Action Movies, Partying	Gambling
FCCC-P	Alpha Complex History	Liturgical Studies	Eschatological Studies
Frankenstein Destroyers	Demolition	Toolmaking skills	Programming skills
Free Enterprise	Haggling	Advertising & Marketing	Bribery, Forgery
Humanists	Marital Arts [sic]	Hobbies, Languages	Old Reckoning Cultures
Illuminati	————— skills taught by your cover society —————		
Mystics	Drug Procurement	Meditation, Partying	Old Reckoning Drugs
Pro Tech	Experimental Equipment Repair/ Maintenance	Video Games	WMD
Psion	Power Studies	Comic Book Trivia	Twitchtalk
PURGE	Demolition	Gloating	Bioweapons, Twitchtalk
Romantics	Archival Studies	Cooking, Knitting, Music	Old Reckoning Cultures
Sierra Club	Survival, Wild Lore, Travel	Birdwatching, Botany, Spoor Recognition, etc.	Bioweapons

* Each society also has a specific Propaganda skill, an Unhealthy skill that is unique and differs from all other societies' versions of the skill.

may have a different motive for rising in Clearance: so they can lord it over their fellow citizens. Of course, you and your fellow Troubleshooters are certainly immune to such selfishness.

Note: Players who ascend to **PARANOIA** after playing other (non-fun) RPGs sometimes mistake a rise in Security Clearance for what some games might call 'going up in level' – an increase in the character's abilities or general competence. **This is incorrect!** Security Clearance simply measures The Computer's current regard for the character.

The Computer's regard for you and hence your Security Clearance, might change often, both up and down. This absolutely does not imply that the GM is running the game capriciously, without due respect for your character's careful career plans. Nonsense. Who could imagine such a thing?

Attributes

Your Troubleshooter, like every human character in Alpha Complex, has two innate *attributes*: *Power* and *Access*.

Warning! Each of your attributes has a numerical rating but at Clearance **RED** you are not permitted to know your attribute ratings. You are only allowed to know, in a general way, what each attribute measures. **Displaying knowledge of your own or any character's attribute ratings below Clearance ULTRAVIOLET is treason.**

Power measures the strength of your mutant power. The higher your Power rating, the more effectively you can use your power.



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'Highly Flammable's really not the best Tic.'

Access describes how smoothly you can get things done in the Alpha Complex bureaucracy. It measures your awareness of intricate clerical procedures and your ability to pull strings to get favours from influential people.

Access is different from Security Clearance, which measures The Computer's trust in you. Access is not trustworthiness but streetwise efficiency. The higher your Access, the more smoothly you can (for instance) get that disgruntled clerk behind the counter in PLC to have a broken showerhead repaired pronto.

In this way Access is better than Security Clearance. A high Security Clearance just moves you to the front of the PLC line and lets you threaten the clerk – but if the clerk does not have the replacement showerhead, threats won't help. The Access attribute lets you realise you need Plumbing Supply Requisition Form 2214-PLC-5632 rev. 12, in sextuplicate. Or Access can instead ensure that a friend in Free Enterprise lines up an **INFRARED**-market showerhead pronto.

Draining attribute points

You are not cleared to understand how the GM uses your attribute ratings in play.

In general terms, he tracks these ratings as a pool of points, which he may spend to let your character accomplish tasks.

If you are using your mutant power, the GM may drain Power points from your current rating to represent the energy you expend swallowing uranium or setting your supervisor on fire.

If you want to get something done in the bureaucracy, the GM may drain Access points from your rating to represent your cashing in favours to locate your briefing room or repair your showerhead.

Do not ask the GM how many points you have or how many he has drained to accomplish a given task. These questions are prohibited and punishable by stern measures.

After draining your points, the GM will tell you the result of your action. He may or may not divulge whether the drain had any effect, as it suits his mysterious purpose.

You will not know if you run out of attribute points. You can perhaps deduce it from repeated failures but this is

mere guesswork. The kindly GM usually replenishes your points at the start of the next scene or play session. **Do not ask when the GM will next replenish your attribute points. This question is forbidden and will incur reprisal.**

Equipment

By making Alpha Complex an all-embracing command economy drawing on the collective effort of all loyal citizens, taking from each citizen according to his ability and giving to each according to [CLASSIFIED], The Computer has fought off the Communist menace. In recent years The Computer's High Programmers have reshaped the Complex economy to encourage greater concentration of wealth in those best able to spend it wisely: the High Programmers. To this end PLC manufactures a wide range of consumer goods that you, as a loyal citizen, are extremely strongly encouraged to buy. Buy often! Spend freely! Spend to the limit of your means, for the good of the High Programmers and hence of all Alpha Complex!

You have both *personal equipment* you buy yourself with your own credits and equipment *assigned* by The Computer's Service Groups as part of your mission.

Personal Equipment

Your personal equipment includes one standard-issue red jumpsuit with boots, a month's worth of REDdiMeals and all the approved happiness drugs you want. You may also purchase more personal equipment using the chart nearby. If anything happens to your personal equipment, you must buy it again if you want replacements and you may earn The Computer's disapproval for flagrant waste of property.

Your starting personal equipment is determined by up to three rolls on the Random Equipment tables. You can roll **once** on each table to determine which personal items you have managed to pick up recently. You do not have to roll on any of the tables if you do not want to – some tables have more useful, but also more treasonous or dangerous, items than others. **Common** items are what any clone might have in his pockets. **Controversial** gear is not treasonous but is suspicious or hard to

4. CREATING YOUR TROUBLESHOOTER

obtain. **Contraband** gear is illegal to one degree or another at **RED** Clearance, although penalties for possessing contraband range from a mild slap on the wrist to termination.

You also have around 100 credits in savings. The GM may, in his infinite wisdom, permit you to spend this money before or during the game on other equipment, bribes, fines, investments and so on.

You also own, as personal equipment, one *ME Card*.

The ME Card

The Computer requires every citizen to carry a Mercantile Enterprise card – universally known as the **ME Card**. Though it looks and works much like Old Reckoning credit cards, your ME Card is far more. Loaded with your biometric data, credit history, property inventory and authentication codes, the ME Card is, in a sense, your identity.

Sadly, the card's built-in sensors don't test whether the individual carrying your

card is the rightful owner. The Computer, in its analysis of economic systems, has determined it does not matter who is spending the money so long as someone is. So if you lose your ME Card, the thief can become Officially You until you recover, destroy or cancel your Card.

Because cancelling an ME Card is a slow, all-day ordeal at Central Processing (though nothing compared to the three-day hell of getting a replacement), it is far more practical to try tracking down your stolen Card – and in the meantime even to 'borrow' someone else's Card and become Officially Him for a while.

Identity theft in Alpha Complex has thus become not just a concern but an everyday event. Wise citizens go to extremes to protect their Cards. Still, take heart! Theft of one's Card does not always mean immediate financial ruin. The ME Card's resources are highly unreliable, varying in their buying power and prerequisites by sector, time of day and database availability.

Assigned Equipment

Your assigned equipment includes: One laser pistol body, minus the barrel. **Note:** Your assigned laser pistol lacks a barrel. It won't fire without a barrel. Laser barrels are colour-coded by Security Clearance and are issued at PLC when you pick up your mission-related equipment. (To get a barrel without proper PLC authorisation is absolutely impossible, no matter what your Secret Society contacts tell you. It's impossible, so don't even think about it. PLC thanks you.)

One suit of red reflex armour overalls in (more or less) your size. Whatever equipment is associated with your Mandatory Bonus Duty (MBD). See page 25 for details. A Series 1300 Personal Digital Companion (PDC).

Your PDC is a helpful, friendly phone and AI contained within a cellphone-sized, easily concealable plastic case. The PDC has a small colour display touch screen, a stylus, a standard telephony keypad and a built-in camera that can document still or video pictures of any treasonous behaviour you might happen to point it at. The PDC also includes built-in online forms for reporting said treason quickly and conveniently.

Random equipment tables

d20	Common	Controversial	Contraband
1	Teela-O fanclub badge	RED laser barrel	YELLOW laser barrel
2	A pack of rubber bands	Gelgernine (very happy) tablet	Illegal black-market hallucinogenic tablet
3	Folder of very dull documents	Spanner	Plans of nuclear reactor
4	Can of boot polish	'Denied' rubber stamp	Can of toxic waste
5	Assorted lengths of wire	Plastic knife	ME card belonging to another citizen
6	Can of Bouncy Bubble Beverage	Shaken can of Bouncy Bubble Beverage	Uranium fuel rod
7	Transtube ticket stub (used)	Sandallathon (sleepy) tablet	PLasticreds (1d20x50)
8	Plastic spork	Genuine realfood apple	'Approved' rubber stamp
9	Red balloon	Electric drill	Geiger counter (BLUE)
10	Packet of algae chips	Can of black spraypaint	Frag grenade
11	Visomorpain (happy) tablet	Tube of Cold Fun	Rolactin (very very happy) tablet (BLUE)
12	Rubber gloves	Gas mask	Smoke grenade
13	'Refer to Committee' rubber stamp	Sticky bandage	Telescopalmine (truth) pill (GREEN)
14	I Love The Computer badge	IntSec 'report on your friends' loyalty card (three more terminations and get a free PetBot!)	Old Reckoning literature
15	Safety pin	Whistle	Stolen gadget – you don't know what it does
16	Xanitrick (wakey) tablet	Corrective glasses	Suicide pill
17	Information leaflet about dangers of mutants	Biohazard sign sticker	Communist party membership card
18	Plasticreds (2d20)	Communist propaganda	10 foot pole
19	Secret society propaganda	Secret Society propaganda	Secret Society I.O.U
20	Roll again twice on this table	Roll again twice on this table	Roll again twice on this table



TROUBLESHOOTERS

On your PDC you can call The Computer at any time, as well as mission personnel if they are willing to take your call. All images, data and voice messages from your PDC are copied instantly to your personal, pass phrase-protected online file storage area, made available to you for free as a public service by Internal Security. (Your End Citizen License Agreement gives IntSec the right to peruse at will the contents of your file area.)

You do not own your assigned equipment. You use it at the pleasure of the Service Group. You are financially responsible for these items; if anything happens to them, you must reimburse the Service Group for the items' cost and you may earn The Computer's official disfavour.

Character creation complete! You have successfully negotiated the character creation process. **You have not yet completed the entire orientation process.** Continue promptly to the next chapter.

Attention!
Before beginning play, familiarise yourself with the **Acceptable Behaviour, Treason and Insubordination** and **Reward** charts for Clearance **RED**.

Character example: 4

Next you roll 1d20 to determine Ben-R-GOX-1's Secret Society. You are not sure what the societies do but with your great Financial Software rating, it sounds like you would be a natural for Free Enterprise. Because Ben-R is in the CPU Service Group, you rub your lucky die, roll a 15 and check the CPU Secret Society table. 'Frankenstein Destroyers' – whoever they are, they don't sound particularly businesslike.

Looking at the Secret skills available in the Destroyers, you don't see anything attractive to a financial software guru. None of their skills are mandatory. You skip Demolition and the toolmaking skills. For Unhealthy you do not want programming; you like Twitchtalk instead. You could create your own Uncommon and Unlikely skills but you like the Free Enterprise entries in these categories: Hagglng and Advertising & Marketing.

For each Secret skill you roll 1d20. Your Twitchtalk skill is 13, Hagglng is 6 and Advertising & Marketing is a dismal 1.

You start the game with 25 Perversity points – and those are *your* points, you the player, not Ben-R-GOX-1's points. You want more, so you choose two visible Tics for Ben-R. All his software duties in CPU have left him with twitchy fingers (carpal tunnel) and he often clacks his teeth together in a fashion some might find annoying.

Ben-R is Clearance **RED**. He has two attributes, Access and Power but you do not know what his ratings are.

Feeling ambitious, you roll on each of the equipment tables. Ben-R's got a used transtube ticket, a gas mask and some treasonous Old Reckoning Literature – maybe you can sell it to someone or plant it on another Troubleshooter. Nothing else looks good on the Equipment chart, so you keep your 100 starting credits for now.

When you show your character to the GM, he notes your strong Free Enterprise inclination despite putative membership in the Destroyers. He decides the Destroyers have assigned you to spy undercover on Free Enterprise. A chance to use that Financial Software skill after all!

5. CLONES

5. Clones

In the old days citizens were decanted in families of six identical clones. Now you are just You, alone – the Prime.

If you die, your memories are transferred to a clone backup body. You have five clone backups. If your GM allows it, you can purchase new six-packs of backups.

In the old days of Alpha Complex, The Computer created citizens in families of six identical clones, all born from the tanks at the same time. When they died, their precious genetic heritage was lost to Alpha Complex. What a treasonous waste of resources! Today, thanks to advances in forced-growth cloning technology, The Computer's loyal servants in Technical Services can now produce new clone copies of any citizen at will and can copy and transfer a clone's memories with absolute accuracy.

Most citizens who meet an untimely demise must wait months for Tech Services to get around to downloading their recorded memories into a new replacement body. Because Troubleshooters have a twenty-seven-thousand-percent higher fatality rate than average, The Computer has thoughtfully ordered Tech Services to

prepare a number of ready backups of You.

A new backup clone will be dispatched soon after you have been killed in the line of duty. Usually, the new you will show up after around five minutes but heavy traffic or multiple terminations can delay delivery. GMs should see page 52 in the Gamemaster's section for a longer discussion of clone replacements; players should read page 52 only if they wish to experience first-hand the loss of a clone backup.

When you run out of backups, you may be able to purchase another six-pack of clones. The chances of this being an option vary depending on how overcrowded Alpha Complex is, what Clearance you are and whether or not you've got an enemy in the clone factory. Even if you are permitted to purchase more clones, note that genetic drift becomes a problem after the sixth clone. The seventh might have a minor speech impediment or be missing a finger. The eighth has the same problem and could also be nearsighted, partially deaf or colour-blind (a grave hazard in Alpha Complex). The ninth has both of these problems and might also have a

pronounced limp, twitch or hump. By the 10th or 11th clone, think Quasimodo.

At Clearance **BLUE** and higher you can spend 10,000 credits to get Tech Services to clean up and correct your clone template, so that your next six clones are as perfect as the original. The only means of template cleanup at lower cost or Clearance is an illicit deal made through a Secret Society. Generally the society requires you to do it a favour at some unspecified time in the future. Perhaps the society will never call in that favour, perhaps they will never need you...

Does your clone replacement always have the same mutant power as its predecessor? Not necessarily. If you want to keep the same power, tell the GM. Otherwise, he may give you a new power or ask you to roll again on the Mutant Power table in this section. Or he might just say you have got the same power for simplicity's sake. Similarly, your new clone may be provided with a fresh set of assigned equipment or you might be expected to loot your own corpse for supplies.

6. Mandatory Bonus Duty

Each Troubleshooter on the team has a special duty. You may be Team Leader, Loyalty Officer, Hygiene Officer, Communications Officer, Happiness Officer or Equipment Guy.

The Computer assigns fun and interesting duties to specific members of your Troubleshooter mission team as rewards for their continued service. These **Mandatory Bonus Duties** (MBDs) enhance the team's chances of success and provide many exciting and educational experiences. Your added responsibility will make you feel loved, wanted and secure... and not in the least bit paranoid.

For instance, your MBD might be *Communications and Recording Officer*. As such, in addition to your normal duties during a mission, you would operate a

valuable multicorder to record every action by your fellow Troubleshooters. You could get all your fellow Troubleshooters to smile and demonstrate their loyalty to The Computer right there on camera as they execute their mission. Wouldn't that be fun?

Mission briefing officers may assign you an MBD based on detailed analysis of your past achievements, your performance on HPD&MC Mandatory Bonus Duty Determination Test 88-9b, your core competencies or your place in alphabetical order.

The Duties

Team Leader: Offers guidance and sound advice to other team members; acts as tactical situation commander in combat.

Loyalty Officer: Discourages treasonous thoughts; looks for early warning signs of Commie sympathy.

Hygiene Officer: Monitors the personal hygiene level of other team members, preventing poor morale, substandard performance and halitosis. CPU performance tracking statistics show [CLASSIFIED] percent of Troubleshooter missions fail due to poor hygiene.

Communications and Recording Officer: Chronicles the mission using advanced video technology, extremely sensitive microphones and gripping colour commentary. Good lighting and innovative camera angles produce excellent training material and possibly even footage for popular evening vidshows like *Bake That Commie!*



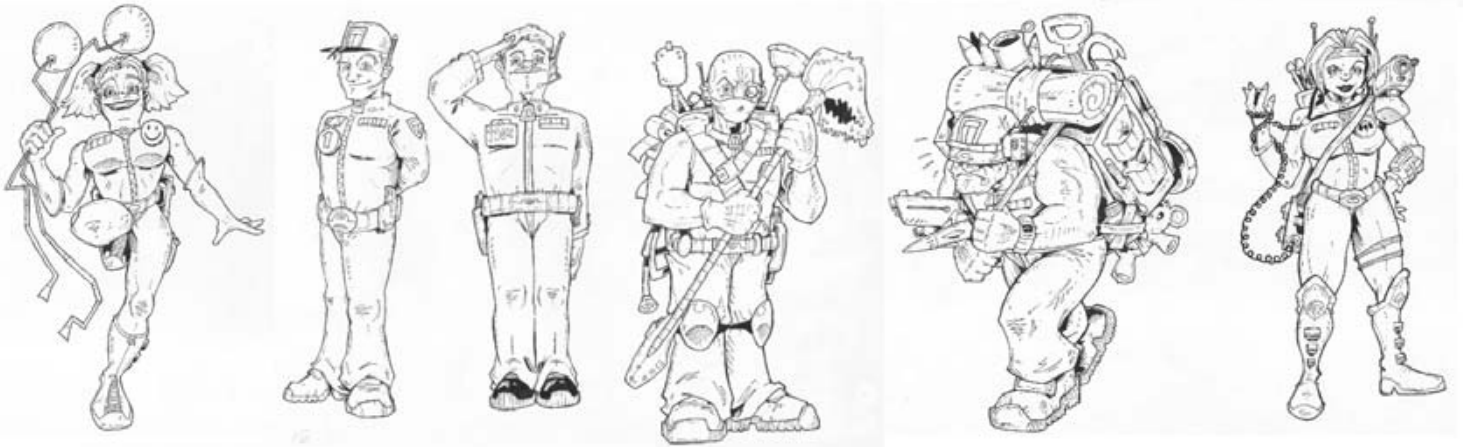
TROUBLESHOOTERS

Happiness Officer: Ensures everyone has fun on the mission; knows jokes, sings, leads citizen-instruction games; authorises and administers biochemical supplements needed to guarantee a fun time is had by all.

Bots/Weapons/Vehicles/Sundry Equipment Repair and Maintenance Officer (Equipment Guy): Controls bots and vehicles assigned to the team; monitors each Troubleshooter's equipment maintenance level. The Equipment Guy is responsible for

assigned mission equipment that gets lost, stolen or damaged.

Badges describing the duties of each MBD are on page 151. Ask the Gamemaster to photocopy these badges and hand them out to the players.



'Meet the team. Then, shoot the team.'

7. Missions and How to Survive Them

There is a standard template for Troubleshooter missions, a trail blazed by the thousands of brave, doomed Troubleshooter teams who went before you, a trail marked by blood and lit by laser fire... ahem. Anyway, it goes like this:

1. Mission Alert!

Your Friend, The Computer alerts you and the rest of your team via your Personal Digital Companion (PDC), by a convenient terminal or by sending a bunch of heavily armed goons to pick you up. Prompt response to the mission alert will be commended. Hesitation or a lack of enthusiasm will be punished.

2. Secret Conference

The traitorous among you secretly

conspire with mutants, Commies and traitors, and receive instruction from their Secret Societies. The loyal among you go to the bathroom – alone, of course and are not at all conspiring with other Secret Societies.

3. Briefing

The team assembles in the briefing room, where your briefing officer informs the team of the task and gives you whatever information is available at your Security Clearance.

4. Equipment Outfitting

After briefing, the team moves onto Production, Logistics and Commissary, where you will be issued with your mission equipment. You may be obliged

to purchase some of this equipment from alternate sources, such as C-Bay or the **INFRARED** market.

5. R&D

After PLC, it's time to make the traditional stop at R&D, where you will be issued with some new experimental equipment for field testing. This equipment is usually a one-of-a-kind prototype, so you will be responsible for its care and subject to severe penalties if the equipment is lost, damaged or fails to function as expected.

Alternatively, you may be sent to one of the other Service Groups to perform some service for them. Perhaps CPU needs you to survey Bouncy Bubble

Beverage consumption rates in the middle of firefights with hostile Commie Mutant Traitors or Tech Services need some Giant Mutant Cockroaches cleaned out of the food vats.

6. The Mission

Led by your heroic Team Leader, you shoot whatever Trouble necessitated the mission.

Over the course of the mission, you may be obliged to engage in combat. **PARANOIA** uses the **Dramatic Tactical System**, a supremely realistic and balanced combat system designed by Famous Game Designers. You are not permitted to know how the combat system works.

During the mission, you may also encounter others engaging in **insubordinate** or **treasonous** acts. Insubordinate acts are punished by monetary fines. Treason incurs greater penalties, such as medication, brainscrubbing or termination.

Insubordination can be dealt with directly by the Troubleshooter – the Team Leader issues fines for cowardice or incompetence, the Loyalty Officer for disloyal thoughts, the Hygiene Officer for being out of uniform or failing a hygiene inspection and so on.

Treason must be reported to The Computer, a mission official or a high Clearance (**GREEN** or better) citizen. In practice these entities assign treason penalties mainly during formal proceedings, such as briefings, debriefings and confessions. To earn commendation from The Computer, an accusation of treason must be credible. The more reputable the target of your accusation, the less likely The Computer and its agents will regard your charges as credible. To credibly accuse a target individual of treason, you need corroborating testimony or, even better, have (or be able to fabricate, after the termination) clear, documented evidence. Documented evidence includes still photos, video clips and audio recordings. A citizen who makes an accusation of treason without sufficient evidence is himself guilty of a treasonous act.

7. Debriefing

Once the mission is complete (or when the smoke of laser-fire clears), the team reports back to their briefing officer for debriefing. The team's performance is assessed, accusations of treason are heard and the Loyalty Officer's and Comms & Recording Officer's records are consulted. The debriefing officer then hands out merits, like Clearance increases or credit bonuses, or demerits like brainscrubbing or termination. Then it's back to your normal lives in our beloved Alpha Complex, eagerly waiting for the next Mission Alert!

Acceptable Behaviour

The following behaviours are acceptable (non-treasonous) anywhere in Alpha Complex:

- ☞ Understanding of this chart and the Treason, Insubordination and Meritorious Conduct charts and their contents. (Drummed into every **INFRARED** from decanting onward.)
- ☞ Knowledge of the current Year of The Computer (214) and general awareness The Computer has not always been here; knowledge that a corrupt, destructive Old Reckoning culture existed before the rise of our friend The Computer. (However, curiosity about that benighted time is very impolite.)
- ☞ Mere knowledge of the existence of specific Secret Societies, mutant powers, the Outdoors or Outdoor plant and animal life. (None of this is polite conversation but it is not treasonous.)
- ☞ Mere knowledge of various kinds of real food and drink; expressions of envy and the general living conditions of higher Clearance citizens. (Portrayed daily on glamorous vidshows.)
- ☞ Expressions of ambition; desire to rise in Clearance, get rich, live in luxury and so on. (The Computer encourages aspiration to greater service, though blatant greed is impolite.)
- ☞ Casual joking or warnings about Service Groups or higher Clearance citizens in general, as opposed to specific individuals or agencies. (Impolite and likely to draw suspicion but not technically insubordinate.)

- ☞ Unauthorised vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower Clearance, in line of duty.
- ☞ Asking questions directly relevant to a mission or duty (these questions are grudgingly condoned).
- ☞ Asking whether a particular hypothetical question would be considered directly relevant to a mission or duty.

Insubordination

This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are treason and insubordination, too. The GM assigns their fines or other penalties.

- ☞ Asking a question irrelevant to a mission or duty.
- ☞ Asking whether a particular hypothetical question unrelated to a mission or duty would be considered insubordinate or treasonous.
- ☞ Asking whether a particular hypothetical question, if it were hypothetically directly related to a mission or duty, would be considered insubordinate or treasonous (nobody likes a smartass).
- ☞ Being out of uniform or sloppy.
- ☞ Being unhappy.
- ☞ Bringing bad news.
- ☞ Curiosity about or postulation of supposed virtues of Old Reckoning times.
- ☞ Curiosity in general, undue.
- ☞ Evading Internal Security or Computer surveillance.
- ☞ Excessive impoliteness.
- ☞ Failing a hygiene inspection.
- ☞ Jokes, insolence or disregard for the importance of a mission or duty.
- ☞ Jokes, insolence or disrespect for a specific higher Clearance citizen.
- ☞ Jokes, complaints or warnings about a specific Service Group.
- ☞ Questioning the ability or judgment of a higher Clearance citizen.
- ☞ Questioning the ability or judgment of The Computer.
- ☞ Turning off one's PDC (communicator) during a mission.
- ☞ Unauthorised vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, not in line of duty.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Treason

Accusations of treason

- ☉ Being accused of treason.
- ☉ Falsely accusing a citizen of treason.

Conduct and bearing

- ☉ Arguing with the Gamemaster.
- ☉ Assaulting a citizen.
- ☉ Being present in a location of higher Security Clearance.
- ☉ Damaging, destroying or losing assigned equipment.
- ☉ Demonstrating knowledge of the **PARANOIA** rules above your own Clearance.
- ☉ Failure to defer to a citizen of higher Security Clearance.
- ☉ Framing a citizen of lower Clearance for a crime.
- ☉ Lying to the GM.
- ☉ Possessing a treasonous skill.
- ☉ Possessing unauthorised food, information or equipment.
- ☉ Refusal to take a prescribed drug.
- ☉ Theft of equipment, possessions or files, including filesharing.
- ☉ Threatening the physical or financial safety of another citizen.
- ☉ Unauthorised destruction of higher Clearance property.

Missions

- ☉ Disobeying an order.
- ☉ Failure to complete a mission or service service or failure to file a proper report of the completion.
- ☉ Refusing the assignment of a service service.
- ☉ Refusing to accept a mission.

Mutation

- ☉ Banned mutation registration.
- ☉ Suspicion or proof of mutation possession.

Secret Society membership

- ☉ Confessing to, suspicion of, or proof of Secret Society membership.
- ☉ Knowledge of Communist doctrine.
- ☉ Being a Communist.

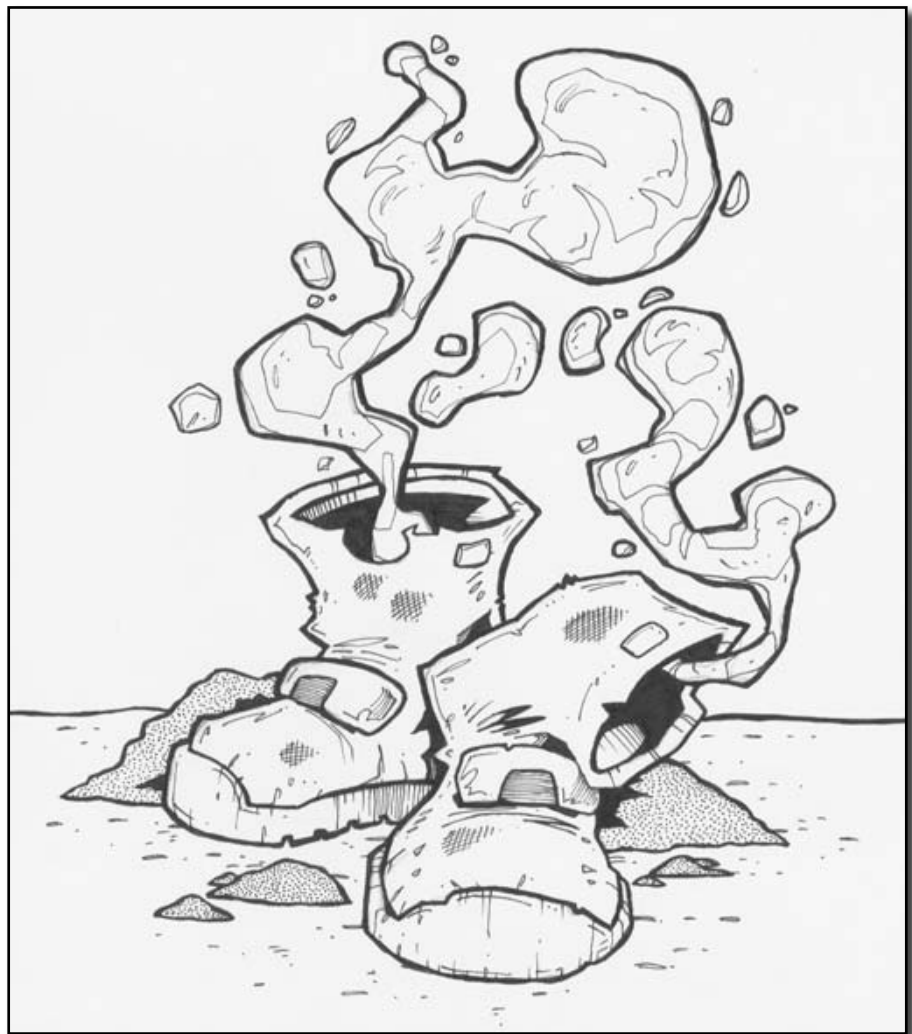
Terminations

- ☉ Terminating a citizen without sufficient evidence.

Meritorious conduct

- ☉ Being extremely happy.
- ☉ Completing a mission.

- ☉ Completing a mission successfully.
- ☉ Completing a Service service and filing a report.
- ☉ Doing a favour spontaneously for a higher Clearance citizen.
- ☉ Risking your life to serve or rescue a higher Clearance citizen, to save Alpha Complex or to serve The Computer.
- ☉ Terminating a traitor with sufficient evidence.
- ☉ Turning a traitor over to Internal Security.
- ☉ Unctuous flattery.



'The Smoking Boot of treason.'

8. DOING THINGS

8. Doing Things

Rule #1. The GM is right!

Rule #2. Know nothing.

Rule #3. Be entertaining.

When you want your Troubleshooter to do something – use a skill, your mutant power, certain equipment, Secret Society contacts and so on – tell the Gamemaster what you want to happen.

The GM sometimes simply tells you what happens. He may instead roll dice to determine the outcome of your action or may ask you to roll a d20 and compare it to one of your skill numbers, your mutant power or your Secret Society rank. In making the roll, you are ‘rolling against’ the skill.

Sometimes the GM tells you the skill you are rolling against, sometimes (in his undeniable wisdom) not. Sometimes the GM will let you suggest an appropriate attribute or skill. The skill areas overlap, so be creative.

In general, if the die roll is equal to or less than the designated number, your action succeeds. Sometimes the roll must be over the rating to succeed. Sometimes the GM may tell you which one you want. Or not.

Sometimes the GM may allow you and other players to spend Perversity points to adjust the number you need to roll, thereby adjusting your chance of success. These adjustments, called *General Perversity Modifiers*, are described in the section ‘Scenes’.

Scenes

A scene is the basic unit of play. Typically it begins when the Troubleshooters arrive at a location directly important to the mission’s main storyline. Typically it ends when everybody gets ki... – when the Troubleshooters resolve the scene’s objectives.

The GM will tell you when a scene starts or ends. The start and end of a scene are each marked by a game event.

Perversity point ration (scene start): The GM awards you a number of Perversity points.

Congeniality award (scene end): The GM may optionally offer a bonus award of Perversity points to the Troubleshooter who most needs a morale boost.

The GM might ask each player in turn to say aloud which player most deserves the Congeniality award. It is entirely permissible to vote for yourself but there is no secret ballot. You voice your opinions to all. The GM may give the top vote winner(s) the award, may give it to a different player or may give no award at all.

Scenes and non-scenes

Examples of scenes directly relevant to the mission’s main storyline:

The Troubleshooters are summoned to go to a briefing. *Objective:* Find the briefing room.

They get the mission briefing. *Objective:* Accept the mission and set out.

They receive assigned ‘service service’ duty, such as testing valuable R&D equipment, taking part in an HPD&MC loyalty parade or transporting plutonium for Power Services. *Objective:* Accept the service service and set out.

They go to the mission site and investigate. *Objective:* Resolve the situation. (This may take several scenes.)

They report for individual confessions, group debriefing and dispensation of rewards and punishment. *Objective:* Take it with a steely grin.

By contrast, the following incidents are not part of the mission’s main storyline and would not usually be scenes:

You break off from the group to meet your Secret Society contact in a supply closet.

Learning a fellow Troubleshooter has the treasonous Machine Empathy mutation, you draw him into a boiler room for a fast confab exploring possible blackmail and extortion schemes.

For unknown reasons the team leader orders the team to stop at the recreation centre to watch the premiere of the reality vidshow *My Dream Bot*.

Perversity points

Perversity points are the Gamemaster’s reward to you for entertaining everyone. You can earn them in both scenes and non-scenes, whether or not your character is actually present in the scene. All you have to do is be amusing, help the storyline along or really roast a fellow Troubleshooter – roast him with *style*.

The GM rewards you yourself, not your character, with Perversity points. If your Troubleshooter dies for good, you still keep your current Perversity point totals and can spend them with your next character.

You and the GM can track Perversity points on paper but it works better to use poker chips. Use different colours of chips, if available, to represent 1, 5 and 10 Perversity points.

How you earn Perversity points

Using incontestably fair judgment, the GM may decide to award you Perversity points in these situations:

At the start of each scene.

When you do things the others find entertaining. This may happen many times during a scene, if you are playing well.

When you play your Tics and Secret Society missions entertainingly

When you alert the GM to another player’s treasonous behaviour or rules violations – in particular, to displays of rules knowledge above the character’s Security Clearance.

When you perform a valuable or interesting service that improves the game (say, creating a fascinating new rumour), gets a stalled play session moving or helps lighten the GM’s load and mood (playing an NPC for a scene, bribing the GM with munchies or beverages, paying the pizza delivery guy and so on).

When you **stylishly** and (in most cases) fatally betray a fellow Troubleshooter to fulfil the dictates of The Computer, a Secret Society mission or even a personal rivalry.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

The key word here is *stylishly*. Any old Troubleshooter can earn good standing with The Computer by terminating a traitor but to earn Perversity points, you must terminate your enemy with panache – with gumption and avowed self-satisfaction – in short, with style.

A stylish termination typically requires you to inform your victim beforehand. Separate your target from all support, reduce him to helpless panic, take a few delicious moments to explain – even, if you are bold, to explain *in painstaking detail* – exactly what he did to deserve your imminent meting of justice and finally off him as you would a rabid Commie.

Does your breath quicken at this prospect? Do your fingers already tremble on your laser trigger? You understand, then, the meaning of style.

How you spend Perversity points

You can spend Perversity points to improve your position in life or to undermine another's position. Here's what you can buy:

General Perversity Modifiers: When the GM generously allows it, you can spend points to adjust the success of your own or others' die rolls. See the next section.

Triggering Other Player's Tics or Secrets: You can offer Perversity Points to another player, either openly or in a secret message, along with a suggested action related to his Tic or one of his Secrets. If he accepts the proffered Perversity, he must also follow your suggested action. 'Bob-R, I think you've got the Electroshock mutation and wouldn't it be terrible if your mutant power accidentally fried the multicorder you're holding? There are five Perversity Points in it for you...'

The other player can refuse, of course but the GM may require him to pay you an equal ration of Perversity points if your suggestion was an especially appropriate or amusing one. You may only attempt this once per scene.

Social perks: Perversity points are not really intended as currency among players but you may find that a generous

donation of points gets you the seat near the GM that makes note-passing easier. Perhaps a few points will get you a roll of the GM's lucky die, a cold can of bubbly beverage or first choice of the munchies. Use your imagination.

General Perversity Modifiers

You will probably spend most of your Perversity points on General Perversity Modifiers. Other (non-fun) roleplaying games use lots and lots of modifiers. You apply them to figure out what number you need to roll.

Non-Fun game player: I aim my rifle and fire it at the lead goon.

GM: Okay, your rifle skill is 10, +3 for aiming, -2 for the range to the target, -4 for his armour but he doesn't see you so that's +3 and you're using the targeting scopebot and depleted-uranium ammo for +4, so you need to roll... wait, what was your skill again?

PARANOIA makes this process easy by reversing cause and effect. When the GM allows it, you and your fellow players can spend Perversity points as General Perversity Modifiers to influence your roll's success chance for better or worse. The Gamemaster may request that you describe what circumstances are causing the modifier. After all points are spent and the final success chance is determined, the GM interprets the circumstances of the roll to fit all the modifiers.

In many cases you'll spend points secretly. Sometimes, especially in momentous encounters, the GM will require you to announce how you are spending points. For example:

PARANOIA Player #1: I aim my cone rifle and fire it at the lead traitor. I have Violence 10, so I need a 10 or less to hit.

Player #2: No you don't. I'm spending 2 Perversity points on a General Perversity Modifier to reduce the number you need to roll down to 8. Your cone rifle's sight is off!

Player #1: Bastard!

Player #3: Three more points to reduce it from 8 to 5. The Commie's got cover from, I dunno, steam pipes.

Player #1: Betrayer!

Player #4: Two more to reduce the hit roll to 3.

GM: Describe it.

Player #4: Er...um...

GM: The traitor slips on something?

Player #4: Sure.

Player #1: I'll get you in the mess hall!

Player #5: Uh, I'll pass.

Player #6: Well, I support this heroic action. [Player #6 secretly knows Player #1's target is the high secret society official Player #6 has been ordered to assassinate.] I'll spend 5 to raise the hit roll back up to 8. The scope's working.

Player #1: Good. I'm spending 5 to raise it to 13, I'm a really good shot.

GM: All right. Plus 3 to hit, let's see... [Thinks.] Your malfunctioning rifle scopebot blinks back on just as the traitor's foot slips on a stray NiceLife empty. The scopebot says, 'Hey, what's up? Did I miss anything?'

Player #1: 'Scopebot, target that traitor!'

GM: The scopebot says, 'Ready!' Okay, roll.

Player #1: Here goes....

If the players' collective Perversity points expenditures had instead reduced Player #1's success roll to (say) 6 or less, the GM might instead retrofit the in-game situation as follows:

GM: All right, you're 4 down. [Thinks.] The cone rifle's broken scopebot suddenly yells drunkenly, 'Lubricant for everybody!' The traitor's head whips around. Even though he couldn't possibly have heard you at this range, he heard you. [The GM has spontaneously decided to give the target the *Hypersenses mutation*.] He dives for the ground. Roll.

See? Perversity Modifiers work like ulcers. People used to think you got ulcers from worrying too much. They had it backward; it turns out you get ulcers from bacteria and your stomach pains make you worry. In exactly the same way, sort of, **PARANOIA** takes other games' arduous combat process (assess circumstances to figure out the modifiers) and reverses it for smooth and easy retrofitting (get the roll and then figure out the modifiers that caused it).

Your fellow players may ask something like, 'If the GM interprets one set of Perversity modifiers so my cone rifle gives me a bonus, how can I not get the same bonus in later attacks, even when Perversity goes against me?'

8. DOING THINGS

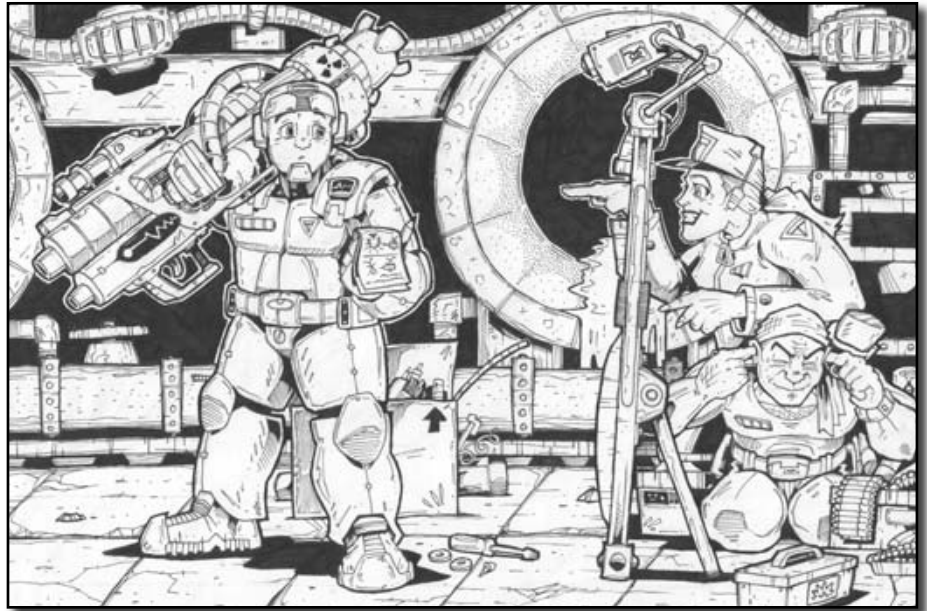
You, a wise player, can gently correct them in the characteristic **PARANOIA** way, as follows:
'Quiet, or the GM will let me kill you.'

Spending limits: If the GM allows Perversity spending, you can usually spend up to 5 Perversity points on Perversity to affect a roll and you usually only get one spending chance per roll.

Sometimes the GM will let only the acting player (the one rolling the dice) spend points on Perversity. Other times, the GM will go around to each player in turn, solicit Perversity spending and move on. When everyone has spent once or passed, the acting player rolls. In truly climactic – not to say 'chaotic' – situations, the GM may allow you and everyone else to spend freely, without limit, as many times as you like until your points (or you) are exhausted.

Rationalising the perverse: You can spend on Perversity whenever the GM allows it, whether or not your Troubleshooter is present at the scene. If your character is present, etiquette (or maybe the GM) requires you to do something in the game to reflect your spending. ('I'm poking him in the ribs as he aims, -2 Perversity.')

Public or silent: The GM may ask you to declare your Perversity spending publicly, or – more characteristic of **PARANOIA** – ask each player in turn to silently mark '+' (plus) or '-' (minus) on a sticky-note and pass it to him, along with poker chips representing the number of Perversity points spent. These cryptic glyphs indicate the two possible kinds of Perversity spending. A plus increases the player's success chance; a minus reduces the chance.



'Experimental weapon testing is an honour. Usually, a posthumous honour.'

The Prime Rules for Players

Player Rule #1. The Gamemaster is right!

Player Rule #2. Avoid knowing the rules.

As a Troubleshooter, you are Security Clearance **RED**. Displaying knowledge of rules of higher Clearance than **RED** is treasonous. Arguing with the Gamemaster is incredibly treasonous (see Player Rule #1).

Player Rule #3. Entertain everyone.

Your fellow Troubleshooters want to kill traitors, that is, you. Repeatedly. You can gain some protection by spending Perversity points. You earn Perversity points by being entertaining. The best protection lies in the good will of the Gamemaster. You earn his good will by being entertaining. To put it another way: **Entertain or die!**

Amuse the Gamemaster and the other players, or you are in for a short and frustrating career. Here's why:

1. Your Troubleshooter's path to success involves capturing traitors and creatively betraying, gloating over and terminating fellow Troubleshooters.
 2. Often, doing this requires treasonous behaviour, especially during the gloating and terminating parts. Treason is punishable by fines, demotion, censure, medication, brainscrubbing or summary execution, possibly all at once.
 3. So while committing treason how can you protect yourself? When it really counts, your actions must succeed. You must successfully hit your target or jiggle a security camera or alter a video recording.
 4. You increase your chances of success by spending Perversity points on General Perversity Modifiers. (Perversity points and Perversity are explained in this chapter.)
 5. You get Perversity points by doing stuff that surprises, amuses or pleases everyone, furthers your mission or otherwise improves the play experience for everybody. Sometimes unctuously flattering the GM works too.
- So: By being entertaining, you can get away with treason – or at least it improves your chances.



9. Tips for Traitors

Never saw a boot I couldn't lick.

Or a bot sensor. Or a Computer terminal. Indeed, licking the metaphorical boots of The Computer is the primary survival skill. You know what The Computer wants to hear: Its citizens are safe and happy, treason has been rooted out and destroyed and the citizens are endlessly grateful to The Computer for its bountiful generosity and compassionate concern.

Never tell anyone (or anything) something that he, she or it does not want to hear. If this compels you to misstate yourself and you are caught creatively interpreting the facts, immediately and humbly acknowledge your 'error' in memory, perception or judgment or blame the misinformation on some other source – preferably the perennial scapegoat favourite, Commie Mutant Traitors and saboteurs.

'Gosh, how could I have ever forgotten that flybot we lost. It just must have slipped my mind in my eagerness to report to you, sir.'

'Yes, Friend Computer, it is certainly clear from the explicit photographs you have shown me that it was indeed I who smashed the computer terminal with a hammer. Oh, woe is me! Surely I have been made the unwitting dupe of some Commie spy with mutant mind control powers! You must let me go seek this Commie traitor without delay before he corrupts some other loyal citizens.'

Always have a few nice speeches prepared in case you are forced to bootlick for your life on short notice. For example:

'Indeed, I can see that the circumstantial evidence demands my execution. But, in your extensive experience and abundant wisdom, surely you have discovered that appearances are deceiving, especially when the masters of misrepresentation, Communist traitors, have fabricated the web of falsehood to indict innocent citizens, confounding the process of justice and causing loyal citizens to suffer tragically in spite of their unswerving devotion to The Computer. All I ask for is an opportunity to clear my name and to fight this insidious threat to the security of all

citizens and to their benevolent protector, The Computer.'

Numerous catchphrases are sure to receive a gratifying response:

'Friend Computer ...'

'... obviously the work of Commie saboteurs ...'

'... clear implication of the operation of some unregistered mutant power ...'

'How terrifying it is to contemplate that even The Computer's information sources may be compromised by Communist conspirators.'

'No, of course not! The Computer in error? Completely implausible! No, it can only be the work of traitors ...'

'But I was only following your orders when we [executed that High Programmer/cooperated with that registered mutant/tested the experimental matter imploder]. Who could have dreamed that your orders might be unwise or ill-considered?'

'Of course, for my own protection, that important information about [the flybot's operation/the weapon's destructive capacity/the instability of that isotope] was not

available at my Security Clearance. I hope that as I rise in The Computer's favour, such tragic destruction of Computer property can be avoided.'

If you're making a citizen lick your boot, he might as well start with the sole.

A common mistake made by ambitious young Troubleshooters is acting heroically in the service of The Computer. The proper approach is to direct subordinates to act heroically, then, after their inevitable and carefully planned demise (often in the act of their heroism), claim credit for their heroic deeds.

Always present orders that entail certain death for subordinates in such a way as to suggest that you are graciously offering them an opportunity to distinguish themselves, like so:

'Here, Gone-R, you take this experimental plasma-powered flashlight. I'm sure a comprehensive report on its testing will earn you a commendation.' Or:



'Lick smarter, not harder.'

9. TIPS FOR TRAITORS

'Splat-R, I commend you on your courage in volunteering to disarm the berserk scrubot. None of us veterans could begrudge you the honour of serving The Computer in so selfless and loyal a fashion.'

Beware of excessively cooperative bootlickers. Many are simply mindlessly loyal and courageous and present no threat to you and you will find it easy to assign them to useful tasks that they will not survive. However, a shrewd bootlicker may have schemed a way to survive the task you have assigned, planning to exploit his actions to further his ambitions or to bring about your demise. Assign him to the task for which he has volunteered but add some additional complication that he cannot have anticipated. For example:

'Why, thank you for volunteering to attempt salvage of that malfunctioning plasma cannon. A noble gesture. Of course, with such a dangerous mission, it would be unwise for you to further risk any of The Computer's valuable equipment by exposing it to any explosion that might result if you should fail. Therefore, I regret you will have to leave all your equipment here with us in the bunker. Yes, I'm afraid that means your toolkit, too.'



'Some days, you lick the boot, and some days, the boot licks you.'

Accidents will happen – the sooner, the better.

Whenever possible, reduce the number of Troubleshooters in your mission group. Several basic principles are at work here.

First, fewer Troubleshooters means fewer weapons aimed at your back.

Fewer Troubleshooters also means more casualties to be tailored to your scapegoat requirements without the embarrassment of contradictory testimony.

'Yes, the villainous traitor Fawlg-I was obviously responsible for sabotaging our mission at every turn. How unfortunate that he did not survive so that we might force from him the complete story of his heinous betrayals.'

Fewer Troubleshooters means less confusion when the commendations are handed out. (If you are the only survivor of a successful mission, you can certainly

dramatize your crucial role without argument.)

The unsophisticated method of reducing mission staff is summary execution. This technique is effective if well-planned and executed, but, if no more than an impulsive bit of gunplay, the executioner is often executed by his victim – or by other trigger-happy citizens who want to join in the fun.

The accident is a more controlled and efficient method of reducing staff. A properly staged accident, even if it fails, does not prompt the victim to pull his weapon and start firing away. A well planned accident may not alert a victim that he has been the target of an attack; even if he suspects he has been set up, the victim is not sure who to shoot in retaliation. Also, occasionally survivors may be called to task when a mission group is decimated; if the fatalities were obviously 'accidents', charges of false execution are not likely to be filed.

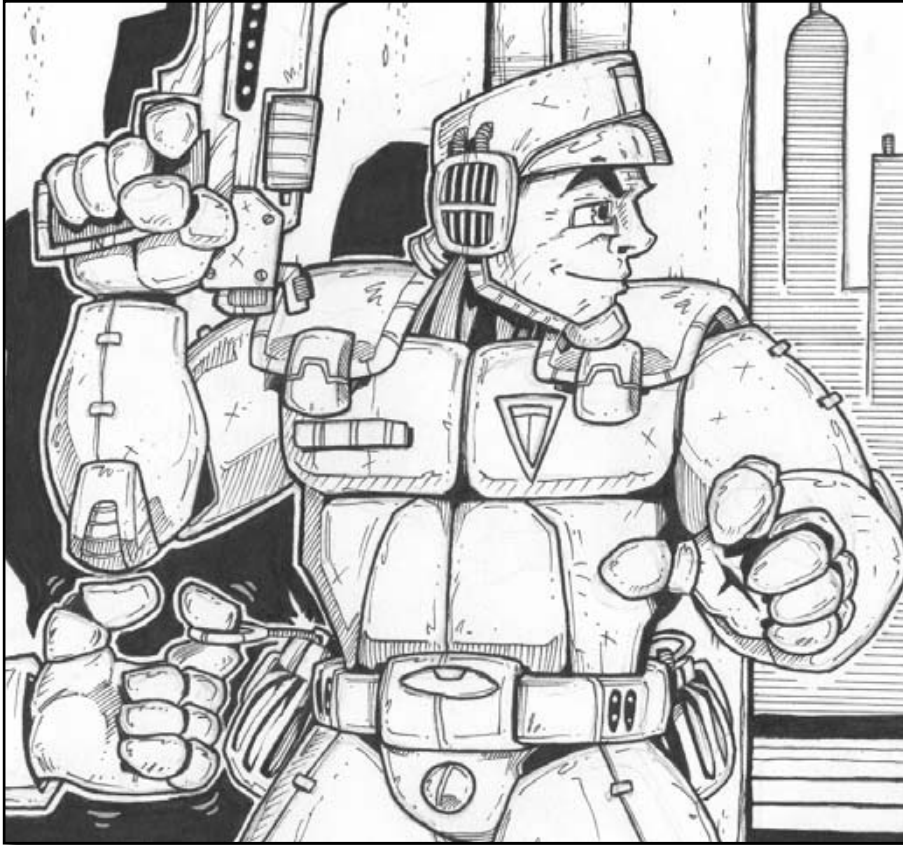
Whoever heard of a trustworthy citizen?

A good position in the mission deployment is vital to survival. Since the mission leader usually has the power to order the group deployment as he likes, a discussion of best choices is properly addressed to mission leaders. Troubleshooters should understand these basic principles.

The coveted position in any mission deployment is at the rear of the group. Normally, this position is preempted by the mission leader. (Oh, fortunate mission leader!) If you are the mission leader or the ranking citizen, demand this privilege. Do not be swayed by transparent tactics like, *'Say, my combat skills and training make me the perfect one to guard against attack from the rear,'* or, *'Because I carry the multicorder and must record all our activities, I must stand behind you, Mission Leader Sir, for a panoramic view.'*



TROUBLESHOOTERS



'An illustration of Troubleshooter teamwork.'

Of course, if you are not the mission leader, *you* must try these transparent tactics. Some inexperienced or dim-witted mission leaders may fall for them. However, if the mission leader assumes the rear, then you must scramble to assure yourself of the best spot you can wrangle.

Far right or left flank is usually the second-best choice for a combatant, affording a wide field of vision and fire. If you are the Communications Officer or some other technician, you can usually make a good case for being back with the mission leader; without a drawn weapon, you present a less immediate threat to his security. (Note, however, a prudent mission leader arranges to eliminate any recordings of the mission and thus the Comm Officer is at serious risk when near the mission leader and out of line of sight of the rest of the group.)

The rear position is coveted for its superior range of fire and the safety it affords from backstabbing; it is also the place where fewest eyes are trained.

Those who wish to do things that go unnoticed will find this is the ideal position.

Conversely, not only is the point man the focus of all weapons on his own team, as well as the weapons of any opposition, he is also constantly subjected to the scrutiny of his companions. This position should be assigned by the mission leader to the Troubleshooters most likely to present a real threat to him. Never waste this resource by placing a low-status nincompoop there. Wimps and morons should be graciously assigned a position in the centre rear of the group and told: *'Now, aren't I a kind and considerate mission leader to place you inexperienced men in such a safe spot?'* Reassure them often about how safe they are and then terminate them at your leisure after the tough guys have been eliminated.

Never assign anyone with a powerful area weapon to a position on the periphery of the group. The temptation to turn and wipe out the rest of the party in one shot is just too seductive. Place

him in the middle of the group where you can keep an eye on him.

Power armour appears to be an advantage equivalent to rear guard. However, the risk of equipment malfunction is serious – no leader wants to get caught helpless in a powerless power suit. A compromise is to assign the weakest, most docile, low-status dolt to the power armour, then position him directly in front of you as you assume the rear position. This way you have the indirect protection of his armour and still have enough warning to get out of the way if he becomes obstreperous.

Shoot only from a position of total superiority.

Inexperienced Troubleshooters haul out their lasers and open fire the moment someone says or does something that might be construed as an excuse for a summary execution. **This is dumb.** You are not looking for an excuse to execute someone. You are looking for an opportunity to execute someone in such a thorough and risk-free fashion, he is dead before his weapon can clear his holster.

Given the generally poor marksmanship of Troubleshooters, the unreliable killing power of their weapons and the substantial protection of their armour, the chances of acing a prospective traitor before he gets off several shots is diminishingly small. Thus, you are as likely to die as your victim. **Dumb.**

Bide your time, build your case against your prospective victim, then plug him when he is relatively unable to return your fire – when he has his hands full of some other kind of trouble, like attacking hostiles or a malfunctioning weapon or a berserk bot. At the least, his weapon should be still in its holster and his attention elsewhere. Ideally, he should never even know it is you attacking him. Whenever possible, attack when you have superior firepower or when circumstances ensure you will hit your target – for instance, when standing behind him with your slugthrower pressed against his torso.

Often, resorting to weapons is unwise. The 'accident' is more effective at eliminating a rival and claiming a commendation. If you never get a good opportunity during the mission, there's always the

9. TIPS FOR TRAITORS

debriefing. A well-supported case of treason is a more deadly weapon than a laser and less likely to backfire on you than a summary execution.

A sucker for every scheme; a scapegoat for every crime.

Carefully select your prime victim candidates. Certain types make excellent suckers and scapegoats. Trigger-happy, impulsive types can easily be induced to start trouble with hostiles, facilitating your shooting them from behind. Super-loyal, heroic types can usually be talked into getting involved in risky ventures that either kill them or distract them enough to give you a good shot at them. Naive types who throw themselves wholeheartedly into a mission won't notice the sneaky stuff you're doing to them.

Scapegoats should be of a lower status, permitting you to give them orders setting them up as fall guys for any of your schemes that backfire or blow up in your face. For example, just before you test an experimental weapon, always ask a lower-status tech to inspect it first. If something goes wrong, then obviously the tech damaged it during his inspection. (Of course, keep an eye on the tech at all times to make sure he isn't really sabotaging the weapon.)

Absent scapegoats (either deceased, missing or imaginary) are preferable to scapegoats who can stand up at the debriefing and defend themselves. The all-time favourite scapegoat is the hypothetical Commie Mutant Traitor always lurking just out of sight. The Computer is an easy mark for the impassioned, melodramatic speech that conjures sinister images: evil agents hidden under benign, loyal smiles; demonic criminals hovering behind every back; tiny, gremlin-like presences of unimaginable malevolence with almost magical power to avoid detection. As long as other citizens can be dissuaded



'Ok, youse guys all charge in, and I'll provide covering fire.'



'Screw the whites of their eyes. Don't shoot until you see their tears.'

from persistently pointing their fingers at you and crying traitor, The Computer can be easily sent off on some wild bot chase, searching for an imaginary Commie, while your treasonous acts are overlooked in the hysteria.

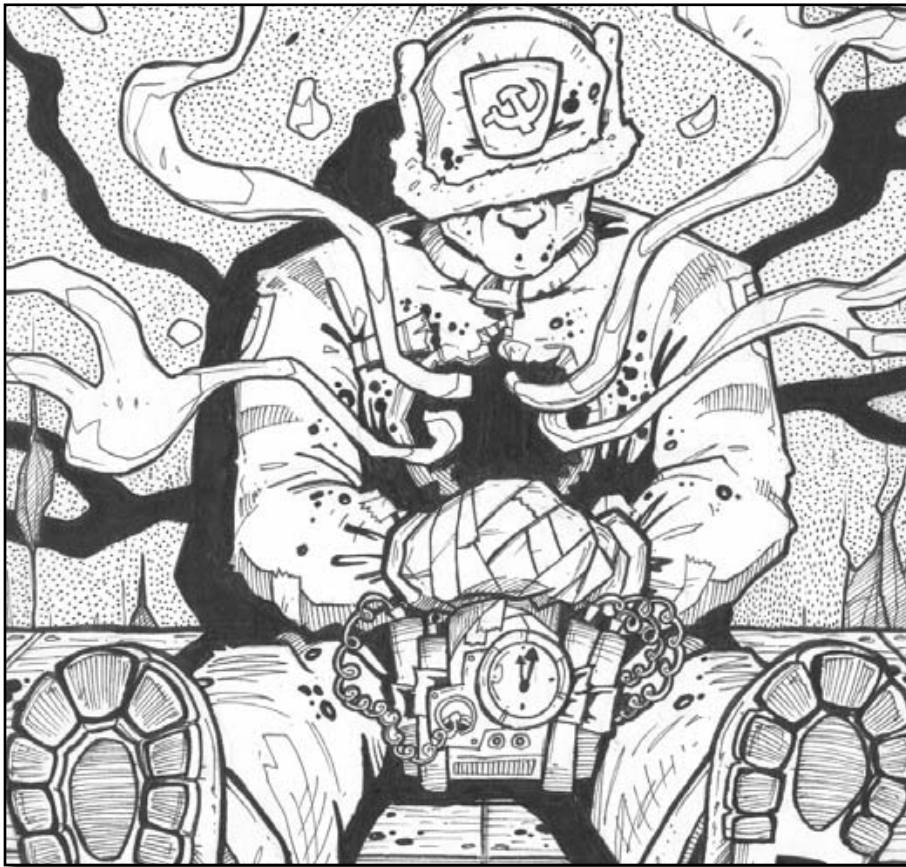
Nothing is more deadly than experimental equipment.

Though fatalities involving experimental equipment seem less memorable because they do not include the thrill of plotting, backstabbing and gunplay, a quick survey of Troubleshooter records indicates a very large percentage of clone deaths are directly or indirectly related to malfunctioning experimental equipment.

Directly related equipment deaths include such typical misadventures as explosions, suffocation, incineration, poison and brain-frying. Indirectly related deaths include secondary effects like distraction in combat (shrieking danger alarms that deafen listeners painfully), weapons that fail in crucial situations, horribly expensive or otherwise valuable devices that cannot be abandoned when they break down in the midst of life-threatening disasters and execution for failure to carry out stringent, unrealistic and impossibly deadly testing programs devised by proud R&D wizards.



TROUBLESHOOTERS



'A scapegoat for every crime. Or Commie terrorist bombing.'

Normally some pretext is made of offering a choice of devices for volunteers to test. Volunteer promptly, in best bootlicking style, for the least harmful-looking device under consideration. Jump in before anyone else and bubble over with enthusiasm. Thereafter, when other devices are offered or pressed on you, confidently assert that your complete attention must be given to the device you have already been assigned in order to properly test and evaluate it.

If no safe-looking item seems available, go for a portable weapon. Though such devices often present serious direct and indirect threats to your health, other non-weapon devices often present equally serious threats but without the potential benefits of a first-class weapon. If the rest of the mission group is 'accidentally' killed before you realise the weapon's true destructive potential, such news is likely to excite and please, rather than dismay, R&D.

Avoid bots at all costs. No other experimental device is so unpredictable, expensive in fines for loss or damages, heavy and difficult to recover if damaged or malfunctioning and capable of perversely independent action that may either implicate you in treason or force you to follow it into certain death to avoid abandoning it.

Never accept cumbersome items that have to be strapped onto your person by lots of tricky buckles and fastenings. These are often the devices with loud malfunction-warning alarms that go off at inappropriate times – like, whenever you use them.

Traitors have nothing to lose by committing treason.

Many traitors are too indoctrinated by The Computer's propaganda to profit from their treason, despite the fact

they are as likely as anyone else to be executed for being traitors, whether they behave treasonably or not.

Take mutants, for example. How many mutants effectively exploit their innate capabilities? Sure, many mutant powers are pretty unimpressive but powers like hypersenses are just perfect for gathering information.

As for Secret Societies, no one ever uses their connections to full measure. Sure, it's dangerous but what isn't in Alpha Complex? The moment you get a new mission, find some excuse to stop by your society drop point and get the inside scoop from some highly placed lodge brother. Or wangle a special, Secret Society assignment that promises a big payoff in **INFRARED**-market information or equipment. *'Er, excuse me, mission leader, but it appears my laser barrel has only one shot left in it, and my spare has a hair-line fracture at the aperture [carefully put there for just such an emergency]. Let me drop by PLC supply and pick up new ones so I'll be primed for this important mission.'*

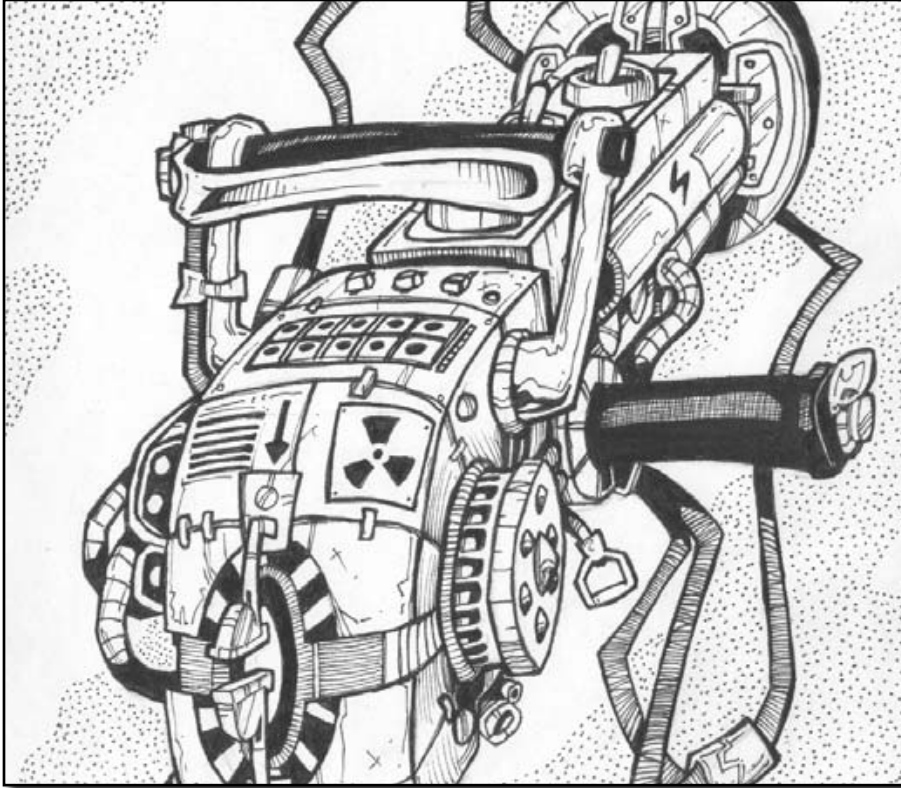
Do not be shy when asking for information or equipment. You are not going to get something unless somebody is feeling generous, anyway. Secret Society higher-ups prefer a little unbridled greed in subordinates; it indicates ambition and enthusiasm they can channel into bootlicking, profitable for all parties concerned.

Debriefings go better when you are the only survivor.

'I speak without fear of contradiction...' is the opening sentence of the ideal debriefing. You get dinged for being the only one to make it back alive but this is a minor inconvenience compared to the alternative. A creative dramatist can transform a disastrous mission replete with treasonous crimes into a heroic narrative with the speaker as the modest model of a loyal, courageous citizen serving The Computer with all his heart.

Other Troubleshooters are potentially embarrassing records of the mission. Get rid of them. Because slaughter is not always practical, bribing or blackmailing them into supporting your story may be an alternative.

9. TIPS FOR TRAITORS

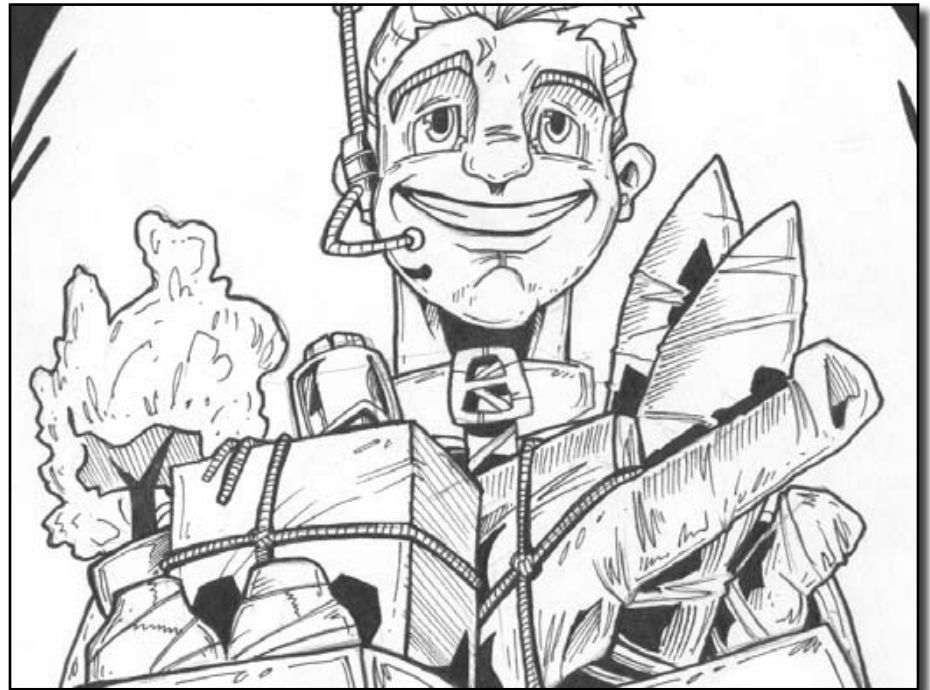


'Science! Hideous, nightmarish science!'

Recording devices, like bots, multicorders and PDCs, must be eliminated, sabotaged or distracted wherever possible. Such records represent hard evidence – 'hard,' that is, to explain away and far harder to dismiss as Commie treason than the verbal statements of other Troubleshooters. Be prudent, however. Unsubtle and unrestrained destruction of recording and transmitting devices will be interpreted as a deliberate effort to compromise the records. It may be sufficient to ensure PDCs are turned the other way while you perpetrate nefarious deeds.

If you volunteer or are chosen as Communications Officer, your problems are more complicated. First, you wish to survive, which is not consistent with carrying something others are eager to destroy. Further, you are the one who gets fined if the device is damaged or destroyed. To improve your chances of survival, stick close to the mission leader; he is usually in the rear and less subject to outright attacks. Further, make it known that for a few credits you can

ensure the mission record features a Troubleshooter's finest moments and overlooks his egregiously treasonous acts.



'A Sierra Clubber traitor brings a bit of the Outdoors indoors.'

Another clever ploy is providing narration for the record tapes by speaking loudly as the events are recorded: *'Note the diligent labour of citizen Don-R as he searches for the source of the jackobot's malfunction.'* (Don-R is in fact reprogramming the bot to respond to a remote control self-destruct device. This will obviate the need for an extensive de-briefing by obliterating the other party members and the briefing personnel.)

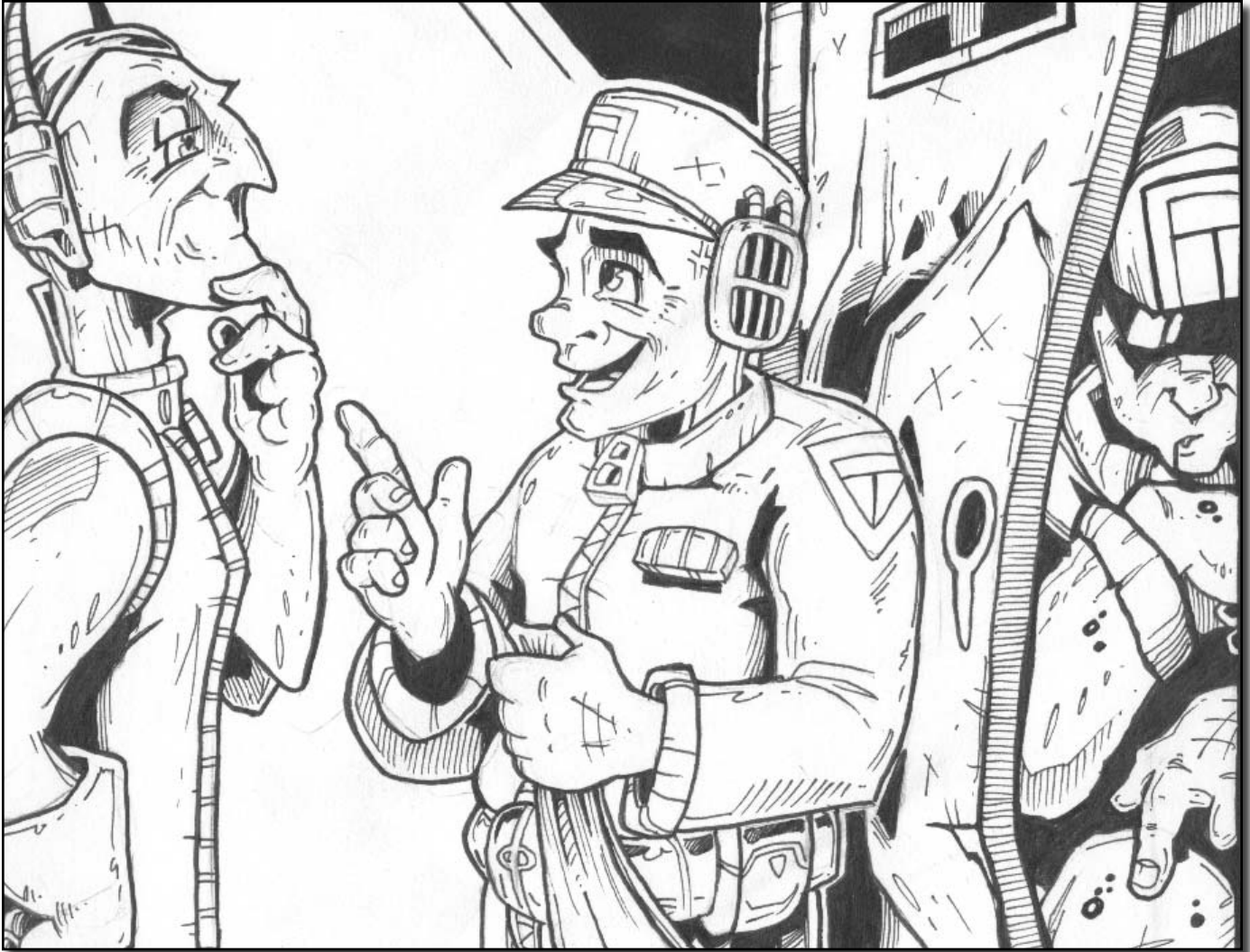
When disaster looms, keep stalling.

When called upon to perform the impossible in the face of certain death, always politely ask The Computer if you can go to the bathroom first – and if you can have a glass of water – and if you can check just one more reference by data search – and if you can field-strip the electron howitzer to stop that buzzing noise it makes when you set the fuse timer – and so on – and so forth. This tactic is most effective if the requests can be made privately and without alerting the rest of the mission group you will be tarrying behind just a bit. Once the rest of the group catches on, everyone gets into the act and The Computer's temper-simulation software gets short.

Stalling is also the ideal tactic for resisting the peremptory orders of security



TROUBLESHOOTERS



'Debriefings go better when you're the only survivor.'

superiors: *'Of course, sir, right away, I'm right on top of it, just have to get my tools ready, yessir - er, could you stand back a bit so I can spread these out on the floor and make sure all of them are neatly assorted by size, shape, colour and serial number?'*

Of course, stalling does not make the looming disaster go away. While you are stalling, you must continue feverishly brainstorming and scheming, hoping

for some inspiration or the intervention of good fortune.

A gifted foot-dragger has one resource he can always count on: the impatience of other Troubleshooters. If the stalling is executed with exquisite subtlety - if your mission leader and fellow Troubleshooters perceive your actions as bumbling incompetence, finicky perfectionism, tiresome attention to

detail or simple cowardice - if they don't perceive your actions at all, so perfectly have you managed to avoid attracting their attention - then the action-oriented, impulsive types often push forward, elbow you out of the way and stride confidently into the trap you were desperately hoping to avoid.

Remember: *'He who hesitates is lost but I'd rather be lost than eviscerated any daycycle.'*

10. GOING FORWARD

10. Going Forward

If you survive, your character may increase his skills and specialties. More experienced Troubleshooters are marginally more competent than others.

You do not know how to increase your Access and Power attributes. Only the GM knows for sure. Access measures your connections in Alpha Complex, so bootlicking and doing favours for high Clearance citizens might help. Power measures the strength of your mutant power, so...er... try exposing yourself to dangerous chemicals or get bitten by a radioactive Communist.

You do know how to increase your skills. At the end of a mission, you can either:

Increase any one of your skills by 1.
This does not affect any associated Specialties.

or
Increase an existing Specialty by 1.

or
Pick a new Specialty. This new Specialty starts at the level of the base skill plus 4.

Survivor's Bonus: If you lost fewer clones than anyone else on this mission, you may increase a second skill or Specialty, or gain another new Specialty.

You may also gain new Secret skills from your Secret Society. Roll 1d20 – if the result is equal to or less than your Rank in the Secret Society, you may increase any Secret skill you possess by 4. You can only increase each Secret Skill once. If you are a member of more than one Secret Society, roll for each society separately.

Go forth and serve, citizen!

This completes your orientation. When you have completed your Troubleshooter character, submit your character sheet to the Gamemaster for approval. He may revise it or ask you to revise it. When play begins, the GM may ask you to introduce your character to the other players; **divulge no secrets** to them or risk early termination!

You now know how to create a character, a little about Alpha Complex and The Computer and enough about the rules

to play. Actually you don't know much but that is the key to maintaining **PARANOIA**. Life is exciting when you do not know your enemies. A successful Troubleshooter develops a healthy sense of insecurity.

However, you cannot let **PARANOIA** paralyse you. You must survive. You must use wit, intuition and daring to rise to higher levels of access and prestige. At higher Clearances you may learn secrets currently forbidden.

Remember: From the start, other players are interested in your PC. Granted, they want to terminate him but that counts as interest. They help determine the adversity your PC faces and they make creative suggestions that shape your PC's situation.

These players are focusing on your actions. Take their interest and play with it. Keep it. Be entertaining.

IR Market goods and services

Now that you have been promoted to **RED** Clearance and joined the ranks of the Troubleshooters, just think what you can buy! You share an assigned apartment with just five or six other citizens, instead of crashing in a generic **INFRARED** barracks rife with smells and loud with snoring. You can afford literally all the Cold Fun you could ever want (and we know how much that is, don't we?), plus Bouncy Bubble Beverage more than a few times a month. Now you can venture down into the sewers and stairwells – down where the IntSec patrols are paid never to go and the cameras are ordered never to work – down to the local Free Enterprise **IR Market**. Down here you can buy all kinds of lucky charms, heisted high Clearance goods and ointment guaranteed to make you invisible to lie detectors. No, really, it's **guaranteed!** Would I lie to you?

What else can you buy? How much is it? At what Clearance is it (legally) available? Here is a small sample but really, you can get anything you want. **A-ny-thing.** Remember, nothing has a warranty, the legality of the purchase is your own

problem and all payment must be in hard-currency plasticreds.

KEY

IR=INFRARED,
(R)ED,
(O)RANGE and so on.
cr = credits

FOOD, DRINK AND CONSUMABLES

Bouncy Bubble Beverage (choice of flavours):

Plain (IR) 1cr

Extra Classic (R) 2cr

Tastes Just Like

Something Orange! (O) 2cr

R&D Experimental

Flavour #71 (illegal) 10cr

CruncheeTym Algae

Chips (choice of flavours):

Plain (IR) 1cr

Not Quite As Plain (R) 1cr

Trippple Cheeze (Y) 3cr

Vague Hint of

Guacamole (G) 3cr

Cold Fun (available in three fun flavours:

Pink, Brown and Vanilla)

Single-serving cup (IR) 2cr

Single-serving cone (R) 3cr

5-gallon tub (O) 200cr

Vita-Yum Meal

Substitute Bar (plain) (R) 2cr

Vita-Yum Meal Substitute Bar Substitute

Pill (O) 5cr

Chocolyke Puff

Crunchers, per can (O) 10cr

Minty Breath-

O-Fresheners, per tin (O) 10cr

DRUGS & RECREATION

Cancer-Lite Cigarettes (R) 6cr

Cancer-Free

Cigarettes (O) 8cr

Xanitrick (Wakey-

Wakey) tablet (IR) 1cr

Visomorpain (Little

Black Friend) tablet (IR) 1cr

Gelgernine (Inner

Happiness) tablet (R) 2cr

Gelgernine

aerosol spray (G) 200cr

Sandallathon (Sleepy-

Sleepy) tablet (R) 1cr

Pyroxidine (Wide-Awake)

tablet (R) 20cr

Pyroxidine capsule (R) 100cr

Asperquaint (Tireless



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Servant) tablet (Y)	6cr
Rolactin (Happy Life) tablet (B)	50cr
Smoking Boots gag – fool your friends! (R)	150cr
Smoke refill for boots (G)	90cr
PlastiLaser – realistic zap noise! (R)	50cr
FunFun Firecrackers – safe for all ages! (R)	5cr each
Yo-yo, lasts for hours! (G)	20cr

HYGIENE & MAINTENANCE

Teela-O Pocket Mirror (R)	5cr
Hottorch (R)	100cr
Instant Cleans-O-Spray (R)	50cr
Comb, red (R)	5cr
Lemonie-Moistened Towelettes, 20 count (R)	50cr
Hammer (O)	10cr
Dental floss, 10m (O)	1cr
Crowbar (Y)	10cr
Bandages, self-stick, box of 25 (Y)	25cr
Chapstick, Dyno-mint flavor (G)	100cr
Nail (I)	1cr
Chainsaw, electric (I)	100cr

CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

Pen (plastic, black stick, black ink) (IR)	3cr
--	-----

Pen (metal, black w/gold trim, red or black ink) (R)	10cr
Ink refills:	
Black (IR)	1cr
Red (R)	1cr
Orange (O)	3cr
Invisible (illegal)	25cr
Invisible revealer (G)	160cr
Gas mask (R)	50cr
Sneakers, black w/red stripes (R)	120cr
Sneakers, red w/black stripes (R)	220cr
Shoelaces, spare (O)	1cr
Heat-resistant mittens (O)	35cr
FastDraw Executive laser holster (O)	90cr
Sunglasses (O)	2cr
Pencil, disposable (O)	1cr
Notepad (G)	1cr
Hiking boots (B)	75cr

SURVIVAL & TECHNOLOGY

Bullhorn, with MegaBooster! (R)	50cr
Plasticord, per meter (R)	1cr
Binoculars (O)	50cr
Stopwatch (Y)	15cr
Slide rule (Y)	10cr
Magnifying glass, bifocal (G)	5cr
Collapsible travel bag (G)	50cr

Box of matches (B)	1cr
Lantern, electric (B)	20cr
Geiger counter (B)	100cr
Utility knife multi-tool (B)	50cr
Nightvision goggles (I)	300cr
Disposable lighter (I)	4cr
Calculator (I)	10cr
Umbrella (V)	10cr
Fake RED laser barrel, non-op (illegal)	12cr
Fake ORANGE barrel, non-op (illegal)	18cr
Fake YELLOW barrel, non-op (illegal)	27cr

PROMOTIONAL MERCHANDISE

[Listed price is for logo mug; x2 for T-shirt, x3 for poster]

Teela-O (IR)	15cr
Funbot (R)	10cr
Mark IV Warbot (R)	35cr
Happy Sector Hour (Y)	25cr
'Death from Above' Mark IV collector patch (O)	110cr
Toothpaste Disaster 'hoodie' sweatshirt (V) w/ 'I survived' logo – very rare, few made (UV)	300cr 12,000cr

11. Rules for the GM

Clearance Level Ultraviolet

GM Rule #1. You are IN CHARGE. You are ALWAYS RIGHT.

We give you these rules as guidance. Use them when you do not know what you'd like to have happen in the game. When you do know, ignore them. We have tried to make the rules as helpful and powerful as we can, but **if you don't like a rule, the rule is wrong**. Good rules help a lot but bad rules were made to be broken, tortured, lobotomised and summarily executed.

Dice are handy for giving players the illusion they control their destiny. This is valuable but roll your dice out of the players' sight, behind a screen. **If a die roll gives you a result you don't like, the die is wrong**. Change the result to the number

you want. You can dock the die credits or beat it up, though in our experience this has little effect.

If a player tries an action you like, roll lots of dice and consult lots of tables. Whatever they tell you, have the action succeed. If you don't like the action, roll the dice and have it fail. If you are undecided, use the rules in this chapter.

GM Rule #2. The players aren't your enemies. They're your entertainment.

Reward player behaviour that entertains you; punish behaviour that does not. Dance them like puppets on strings. Of course, it is especially entertaining when a player somehow eludes certain death

and against all odds, wins big. Not to be sentimental but this is the honest truth: **The best entertainment you get as a Gamemaster is seeing everyone have a good time.**

GM Rule #3. Always turn the players against each other, not against you.

As a **PARANOIA** Gamemaster your job is to set up situations where the players can entertain you. You will do this by dangling great opportunities and then sometimes frustrating them, by giving the PCs many opportunities to kill each other and by subjecting the players to psychological stresses to make them wish you'd just lacerate their forebrains with a band saw.

Sounds like fun, doesn't it?

12. WHAT A GM DOES

Player Conditioning

PARANOIA Gamemastering, more than the Referee's role in some other (not fun) games, involves the psychology of the players.

Imagine for a moment – only a moment – that your players are dogs or mice. You want them to behave. How can you condition them?

If you reward the players for doing something, they will do more of that. So reward them for betraying their fellow characters, cleverly escaping certain death and being creative or funny. If they are really brilliant, let them succeed and advance in their careers. *Always reward brilliance!*

If you punish the players for doing something, they will do less of that. So punish them for stalling the game, disrupting the atmosphere and above all for arguing over rules. **Rules arguments must be universally, comprehensively, ruthlessly punished.**

At the most fundamental level, you presumably want the players to play more **PARANOIA**. Therefore, reward them for playing: Make them laugh. Make them get creative. Make sure when they are

entertaining you, this also entertains them and thereby conditions them.

As Gamemaster you hold absolute authority. Still, you needn't go out of your way to torment the players. You are not their enemy, so don't be malicious. Don't kill the Troubleshooters arbitrarily; instead, set up situations where they can kill each other. They are champing at the bit to

kill each other, so get out of their way. If a player argues about the rules, have a high Clearance citizen take away his PC's weapon, then put him in a dark room with the other PCs. End of that problem.

Okay, now you can stop picturing your players as dogs and mice.

Actually, forget we said that.



'This section is for GMs only. Players are not welcome past this point.'

12. What a GM Does

In **PARANOIA** the Gamemaster presents missions for his players to enjoy. The players pretend to be Troubleshooters; they play secretive and conspiratorial Player Characters (PCs), say witty things, have clever ideas, solve puzzles, blow each other up and probably die multiple times. You pretend to be everything else: The Computer, the Non-Player Characters (NPCs) the Troubleshooters meet, the entire world and everything in it. You stage the development of the mission's storyline. You also act as the game Referee, judging whether the players' actions are possible or permissible.

It is simple. Describe a situation to the players. They decide what they want to do and tell you. Roll 1d20, consult tables (either for real or for show) and decide whether each player's actions succeed or fail. Tell the players what happens and

ask them what they do next.

At the same time, you play all NPCs in the scene, decide what they do and determine whether their actions succeed or fail.

You want the collective actions of the PCs and NPCs to become, over time, a satisfying narrative. To this end, you provide a goal, obstacles, interesting events and a climax. *The narrative is more important than the rules.* Be willing to fudge or ignore die rolls or interpret rules in dramatically appropriate ways to ensure everyone enjoys the story.

GMing a roleplaying game is tougher than playing in one. All a player has to do is get into the role he plays; in most games he does not have to know the rules and in **PARANOIA** he is not

even allowed to know them. If he does something wrong, he relies on you or the other players to terminate him or even set him right if they are feeling charitable.

Yet being a Gamemaster can be extremely rewarding. You are the only one who *really* knows what is going on. You get to create and run an entire imaginary universe.

That job has three parts: refereeing, roleplaying NPCs and sustaining psychological stress.

Referee the rules

Refereeing means making sure the players abide by the rules you set, interpreting those rules and resolving disputes impartially and reasonably. As a Referee, you are expected to know the



TROUBLESHOOTERS

rules; at least to the extent that you have decided which rules apply to your game and which do not. When the rules don't cover a specific situation, you decide what happens. **In any dispute, your word is final.**

Play NPCs

The Player Characters are the heroes of the mission, insofar as there are any heroes in Alpha Complex. They need patrons, opponents and a supporting cast. You take the roles of these characters: The Computer, citizens, traitors and bots. Everyone has fun when you give these characters personality.

Sustain psychological stress

The key to running a memorable **PARANOIA** game is creating an atmosphere of fear, ignorance and suspicion. You want this atmosphere to feel fun and funny but as a practical matter the players will take care of that. Concentrate on the paranoia.

Suspension of disbelief

The world of Alpha Complex is not real but you and your players must act as

though it were real. The more real it feels, the better the experience.

Make the world and NPCs feel real to your players. Tell everyone what they see and sense. The way you do that – the way you establish setting and tone – helps sustain the atmosphere.

Improvise constantly to add colourful detail to the setting, to make the NPCs seem more real and to keep the players' problems from being insultingly easy to solve. For instance, if the Troubleshooters grab an **INFRARED** worker and tell him to walk into certain death, be inventive. Tell them he asks if he can visit The Computer's confession booth first to confess his minor treasons before dying; he mentions pressing orders from a **BLUE** Clearance supervisor; he asks to go to the bathroom; and so on.

On another front, improvise freely to keep the mission moving along. If a firefight is dragging on or if bureaucratic frustrations are boring the players as well as their characters, have a couple of IntSec goons charge through the room after some random Commie traitor, or a

malfunctioning bot, or, or – well, anything that will keep the players occupied.

Remember, Alpha Complex is not a place but a state of mind. We leave many details intentionally vague because, frankly, we can't be bothered to do the work – no, wait, so *you* can create whatever works best for your group. Also, many aspects of life under The Computer are beyond the scope of any book. If you face a question that is not covered, don't bother spending an hour searching through the text for the answer. It's not there! Make it up!

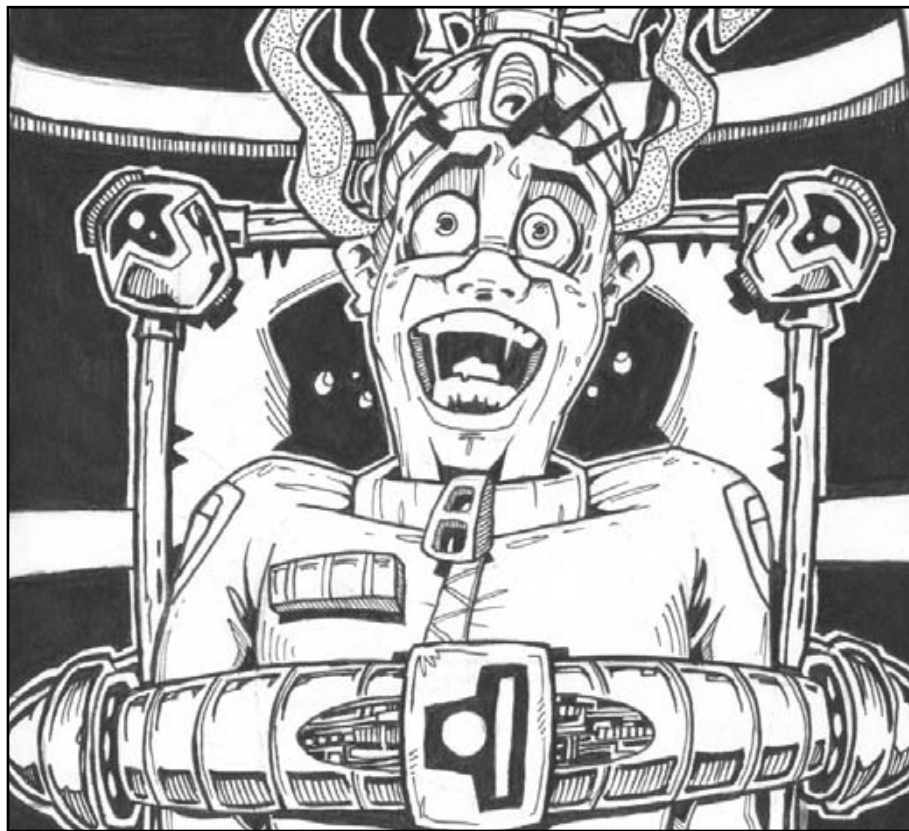
Rivalry

A Troubleshooter's greatest enemies should always be his fellow Troubleshooters. Aim relentlessly, at every point, to foment distrust among players. Sincere, trusting alliances destroy the game. Keep each Troubleshooter feeling personally resentful and suspicious of *every single* fellow character in the group, without exception. Use the many tools described in the GM section:

Perversity spending: There are many ways you can permit players to spend their Perversity points on modifiers to die rolls: publicly, in secret, on their own or other players' rolls. Each method promotes a particular psychology: complacency, suspicion, open hostility. Choose a method suited to the current situation.

Secret Society clues: Many – ok, pretty much all – Secret Societies passionately hate each other. Troubleshooters who bump off members of enemy societies can expect IOUs or advancement in their own. If two players seem to be getting too chummy, have one Troubleshooter's Secret Society contact him with urgent news: His new friend belongs to the hated opposition. Is it true? Who cares? Sort it out at the debriefing.

Mutation: Nearly everyone distrusts mutants. If you use the optional Power increase rules, though, a character can increase his Power rating and even learn new mutant Powers through private study with another mutant who has the same Power. The Troubleshooters as a group want to destroy mutants but individual players may well want to shunt aside a desirable mutie for a



'In the future, GMs will have other methods to maintain psychological stress.'

12. WHAT A GM DOES

private lesson in Power increases. Just by tempting the players with one NPC mutant and a single subtle hint, you can trigger a deadly firefight.

Mission Circumstances: Anything that puts one Troubleshooter in a position of power can cause rifts in the group. If there is a vehicle, then only one person can operate the guns. If there is a security checkpoint, then only one person can go through at a time. Any time that a Troubleshooter must submit to another is a time when the guns come out. Who gets to test the food vat's contents with the chemical probe on a stick?

Lethality

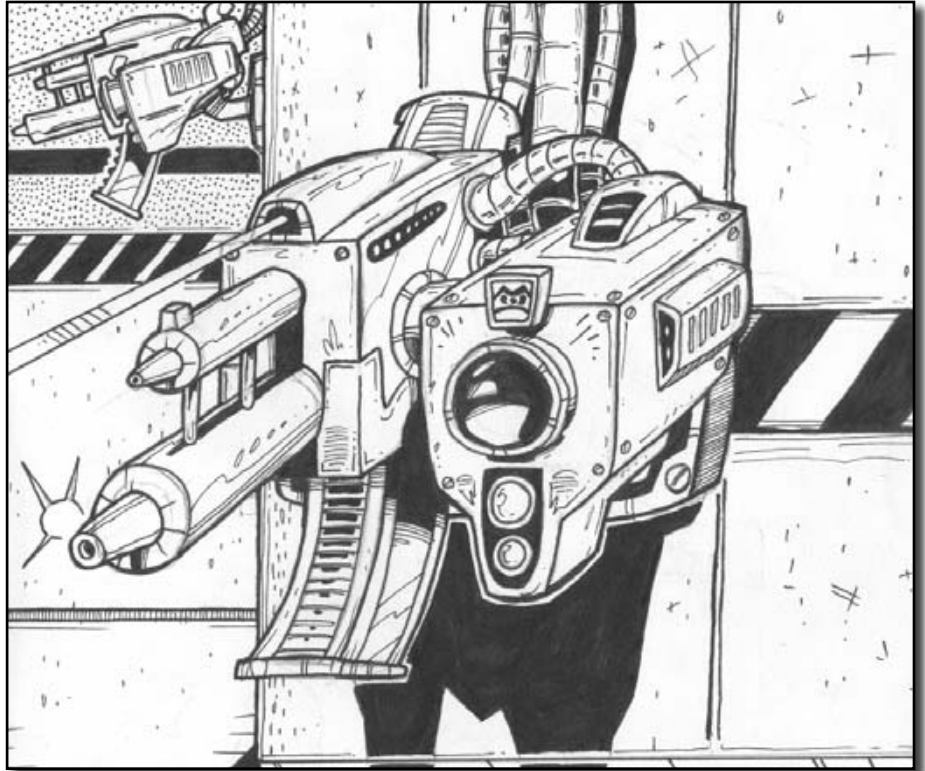
Life in Alpha Complex is nasty, rather brutish and grievously short. Troubleshooters struggle desperately against ludicrously impossible odds. Weapons are deadly, mutations are deadly, rival Troubleshooters are deadly – in the **Classic** and **Zap** play styles even the elevators and vending machines are deadly. The Computer may define practically any behaviour as treason and treason is punishable by medication, brainscrub, termination or erasure. To survive these threats the Troubleshooters need information and they cannot get it. That is why some **PARANOIA** missions have a 100% to 600% fatality rate – sometimes before the mission even begins.

Remember, though, you (as Gamemaster) cannot appear impulsive or arbitrary. You need an excuse to kill a character. You will be surprised how easy it is to find excuses – but the best excuse is always, *always* to let another player do the dirty deed. That way the victim blames his fellow player, not you.

In **PARANOIA** life is cheap. With an indefinite number of clone backups available in moments, dying is easy. It's comedy that's hard.

The Computer

As Gamemaster you play the special role of The Computer. This well-meaning but insane machine controls every aspect of Alpha Complex. The Computer is everywhere; its cameras, recording devices and agents saturate the city. The Troubleshooters will speak with it frequently.



'The Computer is watching you. The Computer is watching everyone.'

As The Computer you are the very embodiment of a nasty totalitarian state. You are paranoid, unfair and arbitrary. You use threats or coercion to force the Troubleshooters into intolerable positions; you watch them squirm as they try to figure a way out that does not involve instant death or execution for treason; and when the crisis sinks to its most awful depths, you cheerily ask for a status report.

Remember, though: **You are not The Computer.** Acting as The Computer, you can be arbitrary and unfair. Acting as Gamemaster you cannot. In **PARANOIA**, sooner or later every character gets screwed. However, players should always feel it's The Computer or NPCs or, most often, rival players who betray them – not you. Just as players must distinguish between themselves and their characters, you must distinguish between yourself as GM and the character you play most, The Computer.

Ignorance

Players cannot know the rules. Players cannot know the true motives of NPCs or

other players. Players can not know how experimental equipment works. Players can not know much of anything. Hee, hee, hee.

Ration information with miserly reluctance. Never tell the players anything useful unless they ask for it and not even then if it's classified at a higher Clearance than they are. Even when information is obtainable, it should frequently be incomplete, obscure and misleading. Worse, you can change things without warning or explanation and then barefacedly deny that anything ever changes. We have always been at war with Eurasia, citizen.

The higher a character's Security Clearance, the more information he can obtain. At Security Clearance **RED**, practically nothing is available.

'Flybot, how do I operate you?' – 'I'm sorry, I don't understand the question.'

'Technician, how do I use this plasma gun?' – 'Oh, it's brain-deadeningly simple. Practically fires itself. Don't fire it in here, please.'

'Friend Computer, what can we expect to find where we are going?' – 'I'm sorry,



TROUBLESHOOTERS

that information is not available at your Security Clearance.'

Ignorance and fear, fear and ignorance. Dedicate yourself to these principles.

An Information Withholding Table, a list of useful responses to requests for information, appears in the Appendix of this book. Use it often. When you offer its excuses, smile charmingly.

Don't panic!

Does all this sound like a lot to track? It's not as bad as it sounds. Of all the RPGs you could choose to Gamemaster, **PARANOIA** is actually one of the easiest. Players can't argue with you over the rules. Players can't get too far off-track as they proceed through their mission; The Computer or a high Clearance citizen can just order them back on track. Players can't get weapons or equipment

that destroys all your carefully planned obstacles – or if they do get this great stuff, it's trivial to have it explode in their face.

Above all, **PARANOIA** offers you, the Gamemaster, a guarantee other (non-fun) RPGs dare not match: **You are always right!**

Six useful things to remember about Gamemastering

1. You can't learn everything at once.
2. If the players ask you to describe something, do. Let them worry about whether or not what you describe is important.
3. Before you run a mission, understand what should happen in each scene. Think about how to present a scene's characters and events and how to anticipate the reactions of your players. If they do something you do not expect, remember the various coercion devices you have to keep them on track: The Computer, high Clearance citizens, Secret Society orders and so on.
4. Expect to extend the rules. No set of rules can be as ingenious as players. Use common sense to handle problems that arise and keep playing. Don't waste time looking up rules! **You are always right.** Even if it turns out later you're wrong, you were right *at that time*. If you change your mind about a rules judgment later, you have become righter than ever.
5. Sometimes somebody has to make an arbitrary judgment. That's you. Do it and get on with the game.
6. Lethally punish boredom. Have fun. Fun is mandatory.

13. Basic Rules

Suppose a Troubleshooter tries to convince an attacking warbot that he is its long-lost creator, the kind person who once removed a painful gear from its fine-manipulator appendage. Does the warbot buy it?

You will face many ridiculous decisions of this kind during play. In this book we offer rules to resolve lots of tasks but we cannot imagine everything in advance. (Actually, we refuse to try. Once one Famous Game Designer actually did imagine everything in advance. His head exploded. Not us!)

If none of the rules seem to apply, try these:

Task Resolution Rule #1. If you know what you want to happen, roll 1d20 (out of the players' sight) and ignore the result. Make a show of checking numbers

on different tables, as if it matters. Then what you want to happen happens.

Task Resolution Rule #2. If you don't know what you want to happen, use one of these tools, explained in the following sections:

Skill rolls – standard, contested or extended

Attribute rolls or contests

Arbitrary Justice (AJ) rolls

Skill Rolls

When a character tries to do something that may affect the storyline and has a chance to fail, determine which skill the character is using. The character's skill number is the roll's success chance. Roll 1d20. If the roll equals the success chance or less, the action succeeds. If the roll is higher, the action fails.

Optionally, you can interpret the die roll

to show the degree of success or failure. The more extreme the number rolled, the more extreme the result. Treat rolls of 1 as amazing. Conversely, rolling a 20 is always a notable and grievous event. Even if Perversity spending has raised the success chance higher than 20, something untoward happens to undermine the success. For instance, the PC's laser blast accurately hits the onrushing traitor but the victim's charred body hurtles into the PC, knocking him into a food vat.

There are several ways to roll the die. Each way has different psychological effects, appropriate for different circumstances:

- ☞ **Trust The Computer:** You roll, hiding the result. This shows authority and control.
- ☞ **It pays to get on my good side:** You roll, showing the result either to

3. BASIC RULES

all players or only to certain players you choose. The latter way sends a clear message to players who annoy you.

- ☉ **Behold, your GM is most fair:** The character's player (the acting player) rolls, showing the result to you and all players. This shows you don't really care whether the Troubleshooters live or die.

There are also several ways to adjust the success chance.

- ☉ **I'm GM, deal with it:** You increase or decrease the success chance as much as you like. Players cannot change your adjusted chance.
- ☉ **I'm disquietingly arbitrary:** You adjust the chance but then let players spend points on General Perversity Modifiers.
- ☉ **Let a thousand perversities bloom:** You leave the chance alone but let players spend points on Perversity.

Skill Contests

Often a character uses a skill in conflict with another character. For example, in an arm-wrestling match, characters use their Violence skill to try to defeat each other. This is called a *contest*.

Roll 1d20 for each character against the rating of the skill that character is using. The contest winner is the character who succeeds by the wider margin – that is, the one who rolled the furthest under his skill rating. (This is called 'making your roll by the margin'.)

Ties mean nobody wins. Also, nobody wins if both rolls fail. Depending on the contest, the tied or failed players may roll again or may both fail irretrievably.

Example: Joe-R and Bob-R arm-wrestle. Joe-R's Violence is 12; he rolls 8, making his roll by a margin of 4. Bob-R's Violence is 8; he rolls 4, also margin 4. The two characters tie, so they keep arm-wrestling. In the next attempt, Joe-R rolls 8 (margin zero) and Bob-R rolls 19 (failure). Joe-R wins convincingly.

In the arm-wrestling example, the two characters kept rolling because the conflict's nature allowed it. If both were instead trying to (say) grab the bottom ladder rung while falling into a maintenance shaft – while keeping the other guy from grabbing it – and both failed the first roll,

you might easily rule they are plummeting too fast to try again.

Free-for-alls

Contests can involve more than two characters and they do not all have to use the same skill. In a pitched battle, Troubleshooters firing their lasers would use the Energy Weapons specialty of their Violence skill, while the unlucky targets might use Stealth to avoid being hit, Hardware to locate the nearest crawlspace or Management to convince the warbot those guys with lasers are actually Commie traitors.

In this case have each contesting player roll 1d20 against his PC's relevant skill rating. Rank the winning margins highest to lowest. The highest-margin player wins biggest and each of the others either loses outright or wins a lesser result, according to the contest's nature. You can use the same rankings to determine the sequence in which the characters act: highest-margin winner first (or last, whichever is best) and then the others in rank order.

Example: Six Troubleshooters are taking laser potshots at a fleeing Communist. Each player rolls against Energy Weapons. Three players fail. The other three succeed by margins of 0, 2 and 5. You decide the margin-0 and margin-2 shots clip the Commie on his left earlobe and right elbow, respectively but the margin-5 shot drops the traitor in his tracks.

Extended skill rolls

An *extended skill roll* is a sequence of die rolls. This represents a task or sequence of tasks that takes a long time: a footrace, repair of a demolished bot, plowing through multiple layers of bureaucracy or a deep philosophical conversation wherein you try to convince a nova bomb not to explode. The player making the extended roll (or each party in an extended contest) makes an identical number of die rolls against the appropriate ability, tallying the number of successes scored.

As GM, you can define the sequence as either open-ended (first player to score five successes wins the footrace or gets the proper form approved) or fixed (if the PC doesn't get three successes in six rolls, the bomb gets bored and explodes).

You decide the amount of time covered by each roll in the contest. In a footrace, each roll represents a few seconds. In a conversation, one roll might cover half an hour. As for bureaucracy – well, let your imagination roam.

Attribute rolls

Every Troubleshooter has two attributes; Power and Access, described more fully in the Attributes Chapter. Power measures the strength of the character's mutant power but can also be used as a generalised luck attribute. Which Troubleshooter accidentally picked up the poisoned can of B3? Who's being targeted by the mad bomber? Just roll Power or pick on the character with the lowest Power.

Access measures the Troubleshooter's connections and ability to navigate the maze of Alpha Complex's bureaucracy and so can be used as a generalised 'getting stuff done' check when no other skill fits.

Arbitrary Justice rolls

Sometimes the storyline hurtles boldly into quandaries where even skill rolls, mutant power rolls and Access rolls may not help. Suppose a Troubleshooter finds an Old Reckoning bicycle and tries to ride it. If you haven't already decided what happens, the skills don't give much guidance. Is bike riding a Hardware skill? Violence? If you like either of those, the answer is 'yes'. If you don't? Sigh. Why do players get into such unauthorised mischief?

When nothing else suggests itself, resort to an Arbitrary Justice (AJ) roll. To invoke Arbitrary Justice, mentally describe the situation as a yes-no question. ('Does this Troubleshooter know how to ride a bike?') Then roll 1d20.

- ☉ **If you roll 10 or less, the answer is YES.** Alternately, the character achieves success or something happens that benefits the players.
- ☉ **If you roll 11 or more, the answer is NO,** the action fails or something bad happens.

As always, the more extreme the number rolled, the more extreme the result. In the example, if you roll a 1, the bike-riding Troubleshooter sails smoothly and gracefully along. If you roll a 20, he sails smoothly and gracefully into an elevator shaft.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Perversity Points

As described in the player section, players can (with your permission) spend their Perversity points to influence a die roll. They can apply these General Perversity Modifiers to any roll, yours or a player's – if you allow it.

What effect do you want?

- ☞ **Frenzied action** (no Perversity): If you want to keep the game moving quickly, don't allow Perversity spending. It slows things down.
- ☞ **Brisk development** (only acting player): To throttle back the pace just a bit, let each player spend points only on his own roll, not other players' and give the player just one spending opportunity per action.
- ☞ **Favouritism** (only acting player): The same as 'Brisk development', except you smile at the acting player. This shows other players the need to get on your good side, assuming they were too dense to see this.
- ☞ **Suspense** (free-for-all spending): When you want to build mistrust and antagonism among players (Go GM!), let all players expend points freely on modifying each other's rolls. Limiting each player to one opportunity per roll can increase suspense. In this case, give the acting player the last chance to spend points, after all other players have taken or rejected the opportunity.
- ☞ **The big roll** (unlimited auction spending): If it's the last scene, where success for one group of players and dismal ignominy for the rest all boils down to *one* roll – hats off to you, GM. You've done everything right. In this situation, let everyone spend points endlessly, auction style, going-going-gone. Drain 'em dry if you can. Make the moment memorable.

Using Perversity

Each Perversity point a player expends on Perversity changes the target success number by 1, either up or down as the player wishes. There are no limits. It is perfectly permissible to raise the success number above 20 or lower it below 1.

After all Perversity points are applied, you then improvise the in-game events that led to the modifier. Then the die is rolled.

Awarding Perversity

You award Perversity points to the player, not the character. If a PC dies for good, that player keeps all unspent Perversity points and can use them with his next character.

Award Perversity point rewards in quantities called 'Perversity point rations'. A ration of points depends on the needs of your current scene. When you want to maintain tight control over the direction of play (say when you're trying to convey an important element of the storyline), award points one at a time, so players feel constrained in their ability to affect things. When you want them to go wild, as for instance in firefights, award rations of 5 or even 10 Perversity points at a time.

Award a ration of Perversity points promptly and liberally to any player who entertains you. Typical behaviours worthy of reward include cleverly betraying fellow PCs, cleverly avoiding certain death and making your life easier.

Be sure to award these Perversity points on the spot, in the moment of the entertaining behaviour. Immediate positive reinforcement is key to player conditioning.

Don't worry that players will stockpile the points and unbalance the game. There are many incentives to spend them and 'game balance' is seldom an issue in **PARANOIA**.

Generally the more Perversity points you award, the more fun the game will be. You could easily award three to five rations per player in each scene, if they are being funny. Award rations relatively



'Gloating is to be encouraged.'

14. SCENES AND TENSION LEVELS

evenly, if possible. If one or two players are left out, they will start whining and holding up the mission.

You can take away Perversity points a player has justly earned but this can create resentment. Instead, put the player's character in the line of fire of the

other PCs. Remember, you do not have to punish a player when other players are so eager to do it for you.

Gloating

A Troubleshooter who takes extra care to finish off a victim in classy fashion deserves ample reward. Give the player an extra ration of Perversity points for

each round he spends gloating over a conscious victim in advance of the actual termination.

Encourage gloating. It makes everyone's life harder, except yours. However, limit any given speech of vengeance and bitter recrimination to two or three rounds or it starts to sound like an awards ceremony acceptance speech.

Common situations and their rolls

Here are some actions you will see often in Troubleshooter missions; along with suggested ways you can use the rules to resolve them.

- ☞ Finding the mission briefing room: Access attribute roll; roleplaying
- ☞ Getting information from the briefing officer: Bootlicking, Bribery
- ☞ Getting needed equipment from bored PLC clerk: Access roll, Bribery, Chutzpah, Management (persuasion), Secret Society connections
- ☞ Getting needed equipment on C-Bay: C-Bay specialty roll (duh), Hacking, Con Games, Power roll (luck)
- ☞ Getting needed equipment on the IR market (the illegal black market): Moxie specialty roll, extended Haggling vs. Haggling contest, Intimidation specialty roll, Power attribute roll
- ☞ Shuffling off experimental R&D equipment onto a fellow PC: roleplaying
- ☞ Manage credits: Financial Systems, Hacking, Cash Hacking, Bribery
- ☞ Attacking with a laser: Energy Weapons specialty roll
- ☞ Other attacks: Violence or a Violence specialty
- ☞ Planting an explosive charge: Demolitions, Hardware
- ☞ Planting a charge on an unsuspecting teammate: Sleight of Hand
- ☞ Running away before teammate explodes: Agility, Power (luck), Arbitrary Justice
- ☞ Cleaning up the mess, leaving no traces: Hygiene
- ☞ Noticing an ME card dropped by a high Clearance citizen: Stealth, Arbitrary Justice
- ☞ Hiding Card at a security checkpoint: Concealment
- ☞ Transferring its credits to your account: Financial Systems
- ☞ If caught, convincing IntSec a rival planted it on you: Chutzpah
- ☞ Fleeing the IntSec officer: Violence, Agility
- ☞ Noticing a hidden laser cannon: Stealth, High Alert
- ☞ Getting past it: Sneaking, Disguise, Security Systems, Power
- ☞ Finding an alternate route: Access roll Data Search or Habitat Engineering, Arbitrary Justice

14. Scenes and Tension Levels

As explained in the **RED** section, the scene is the basic unit of play. Begin a new scene when one or more Troubleshooters arrive at a new location important to the mission's main storyline. Unscripted side ventures and individual meetings with Secret Society informants do not count as scenes.

Use this distinction as one more tool to keep players on track. When you start a new scene, award players a new ration of Perversity points. A ration of points depends on the needs of your current scene. When you want to maintain tight control over the direction of play (say when you're trying to convey an important element of the storyline), award points one at a time, so players

feel constrained in their ability to affect things. When you want them to go wild, as for instance in firefights, award rations of 5 or even 10 Perversity points at a time. Ideally, the incentive to get to the next scene and gain new points helps keep everyone focused.

Scenes have an attribute hidden from players (and demonstrating knowledge of it below Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET** is treason): *Tension levels*.

Tension levels

Each scene has a Tension level from 0 (low) to 20 (high), usually 3 – 7 or thereabouts. The Tension level suggests

how closely The Computer, its agents or other parties are observing the characters' actions. Ideally The Computer wants to observe all areas all the time but resources do not permit this. No one discusses this publicly but every citizen has a fairly good idea how likely he is to be observed in any given spot.

A scene's location determines its Tension level. The chart in the next column shows typical locations for each Tension level. If you do not want to consult the chart every time you change location, assume a default Complex-wide Tension level of 6.

Track the current Tension level secretly by putting a d20 where you can see



TROUBLESHOOTERS

it but the players cannot. Change the uppermost number to reflect the current level.

When a player tries something treasonous involving a die roll, the Tension level is the range of the roll that implies whether anyone witnessed the treasonous action. So if a PC has a 15 or less to shoot his team leader and the Tension level is 5, any roll of 15 or less hits the commander – but if that roll was 5 or less, *somebody* somewhere may have seen the shot.

Maybe it was another PC, maybe The Computer, or possibly a Secret Society, or maybe some faceless bureaucrat watching a security camera and already writing his blackmail note. You do not need to get specific or even rush to tell the player. Still, that act, having been detected, is now admissible as evidence against the PC (see the section 'Accusations of treason'). If no other player brings it up during debriefing, The Computer may see fit to do so instead. If you are stuck for inspiration, roll on the Who's Watching table.

Never let the chart interfere with your own convictions. Tension levels are a convenience for you; at times, you may know very well The Computer – or someone else – is watching. Use the chart only when you prefer not to decide whether a particular action is monitored.

Tension levels by location

These are just suggestions. You can adjust the Tension level freely.

Entries such as '**RED** areas' means all **RED** areas not otherwise listed in specific entries. When an area could have more than one Tension level, use the highest.

- 0 Sewers, reactor cores, Outdoors, conferences with the GM
- 1 IntSec interrogation chambers
- 2 **INFRARED** areas
- 3 Supply closets, garages, bot stations, HPD&MC indoctrination centres
- 4 **RED** areas
- 5 Briefing rooms, food vats, sickbays, clone tanks, PLC warehouses
- 6 **ORANGE** areas
- 7 Mess halls, waiting rooms, grooming stations, elevators and stairwells
- 8 **YELLOW** areas
- 9 R&D labs, any place with Junior Citizens (kids)
- 10 **GREEN** areas
- 11 Troubleshooter HQ, Armed Forces bases, armories
- 12 **BLUE** areas
- 13 Termination centres, re-education centres, IntSec Stations
- 14 **INDIGO** areas
- 15 Power and Tech Services control rooms, IntSec headquarters
- 16 **VIOLET** areas
- 17 Confession booths, CPU monitoring loci
- 18 **ULTRAVIOLET** areas
- 19 Central Compnodes
- 20 Bathrooms

Who's Watching?

Roll	Observer
1-5	Another Troubleshooter. Pass them a note informing them of what they saw.
6	Internal Security, listening in through a hidden bug.
7	No-one but some physical evidence was left behind that will be picked up by a security sweep.
8	A bot, possibly a Corpore Metal member or hacked informant.
9	Internal Security, lurking in a crawl space in the walls.
10	An INFRARED lurking in the shadows, who will use the information to get promoted to RED if possible.
11	A passing low Clearance citizen, who will demand a bribe to 'forget'.
12	Internal Security, watching through a concealed camera.
13	A Secret Society agent, who will use the information for blackmail.
14	A pesky Junior Citizen.
15	Internal Security, via an informant.
16-20	The Computer.

15. Combat

Combat systems in other (non-fun) RPGs sometimes describe weapons, armour and equipment in rather monotonous detail. They permit fine grades of damage effects with results that seem convincingly realistic. Characters have different abilities to absorb damage. Everyone in combat has a uniform sense of available options and the likely outcome of particular kinds of actions.

None of that suits your purpose in **PARANOIA**. Forget it.

Troubleshooters in battle ideally stumble through various forms of surprise, ignorance and fear. A typical sequence:

Shock: 'We're under attack! Who are they? Where are they?'

Panic: 'Oh no. Not them. Those vat-slimes got the drop on us! Me? I never trusted

them! It's all *your* fault!'

Stunned incomprehension: 'How are they doing that? Why doesn't this thing work? Hey, where's our Equipment Guy?'

Terrified comprehension: 'We're stuck! Bottled up! Oh, hel-*lo*, Friend Computer! Nonono, everything's going just, uh, fine.'

Desperate plays: 'I turn on the rocket boots. (if that doesn't work)

15. COMBAT

Existential resignation: 'My next clone is gonna get you back, you stinking Commie.'

The Dramatic Tactical Action System

'It's not that they die, but that they die like sheep.'

—T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land'

PARANOIA is an atmospheric, action-packed, emotionally engaging roleplaying game.

[Choral response: Hurrah!]

Other (non-fun) RPGs have detailed, complex, elaborately sequenced combat systems.

[Choral response: Zzz...]

Complex combat is nice enough when you want that but it gets in the way of **PARANOIA**'s tense, mysterious tone. Ergo, **PARANOIA** instead uses the brilliantly conceived and eminently superior Dramatic Tactical Action System – a simple combat system that relies on flexible rules, common sense, dramatic necessity and the wise and unfettered will of you, the Gamemaster.

1. You decide what your NPCs do

Consider the situation and figure out what each Non-Player Character – each human or bot – wants to do in this round. Usually they want to stay alive and often keep the Troubleshooters from staying alive. They may have strategic and tactical goals and they may want to try something madly entertaining or dramatic.

You might or might not tell the players what the NPCs will do. Some opponents are so stupid and obvious they telegraph their actions. Some are shrewd, enigmatic and full of surprises. Keep the NPC actions mysterious when that would build tension.

Note: It is tasteless – though often dramatically correct and thoroughly **PARANOIA** – to change your NPCs' tactics after you've heard what the players will do. If you commit such an immoral and unsportsmanlike act, make sure you do not get caught. You have to seem impartial.

2. Players decide what their PCs do

Go around the table – your players are all seated around a table, right? – and ask each player in turn what his Troubleshooter intends to do in this round. A player cannot change his mind after he declares his intention unless you, the generous GM, judge the change sufficiently entertaining. 'Oh, Moe-O-DJO is going to detonate his experimental Solar Grenade? Shucks, forget drawing my laser. I'm gonna strip off my jumpsuit so I'll get a better tan.'

Most attacks will use the Violence skill or one of its Specialties, like Energy Weapons. If a character's doing something else, then use the most appropriate skill or attribute. If nothing fits, pick a number.

If a PC suffered a Snafu combat result in the previous round, that PC cannot take any aggressive action this round. You'll learn more about that in the 'Damage' chapter.

Notice that players are only announcing their intention in this step. No one is actually resolving anything yet. That's the next step.

3. Roll everyone's dice

Both PCs and NPCs have decided what they are doing this round. In Step 3, it all happens at once. Time to roll 1d20 for each action. Maybe you make all the rolls yourself, in secret; maybe instead you let the players roll the die themselves for their own actions. It depends on the effect you want to create: omnipotence or generosity. You are the Referee, arbiter of common sense and dramatic justice and wise judge of whether and when players may spend Perversity points to affect their own or any other roll.

If the d20 roll for an action, modified by Perversity and the whim of fate, is less than or equal to the skill or attribute being used, then the action is successful. The PC shot the Commie, threw the grenade, activated the rocket boosts and so forth. The margin of success or failure determines just how successful or grotesquely bungled the action was.

On a natural 20, the action *backfires*, causing yet more problems. If the unfortunate character was using a high-tech weapon, it probably just exploded. Otherwise, the knife snapped, the cover you just dived behind turns out to be a barrel of high explosive, you just accidentally reported yourself as a Commie instead of your Team Leader.

4. Apply all the effects

All hand-to-hand and ranged attacks and all malicious mischief such as mutant powers, collapsed ceilings and so on, take effect *simultaneously*. That is, if Joe-R and Bob-O announced in Step 2 they would attack each other, they both make their attacks now; and if Joe-R's attack kills Bob-O, that doesn't prevent Bob-O's attack from happening. Both happen at once and the effects happen in the next step.

The damage of weapons is listed as Minimum-Boost-Maximum. See the sidebar on resolving damage on page 50.

5. Everyone moves

Anyone still on his feet (or its wheels) may move.

Huh? Movement rules? There aren't any. Characters move as far as you decide they should. If you cannot decide whether a character could reach Point B in Time C, make a Violence roll for the character. Success means he made it. Races are Violence contests.

In **PARANOIA** movement does not usually become an issue. You can run but you can't hide.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Smoking Holes & Missing Limbs: Damage

1. Determine the default damage

The attack deals the damage you want it to deal. If you know what damage it should deal, skip the rest of these steps. If you would like guidance, attack descriptions suggest their default damage in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format, defined on the Weapon Chart on page 90.

2. Apply target's defence

Does the target have armour or other defences? Does the defence apply against the attack type? If so, reduce the attack's default damage by a number of steps equal to the target's defence value.

3. Apply Boost, if any

Divide the margin of success of the attack by the Boost value of the weapon. Round down and then increase the damage by that number of steps. For example, a margin of 6 and a Boost of 2 means $6/2=3$ extra steps of damage.

4. Determine the actual damage

If the attack's damage is reduced to nothing, the attack still hits the target but it has no effect – maybe some armour gets scorched or the target gets really annoyed but the attack does not affect the combat situation. See the Chapter on Armour.

Damage effects are described in the Damage and Injuries Chapter.

A damaged target often becomes extremely unhappy, earning The Computer's disapproval.

16. Damage and Injuries

You can describe a character's current health with one of these conditions: **Okay, Snafued, Wounded, Maimed, Down, Killed, Vaporised**. After each character's name, draw six short lines and label them with the six conditions below Okay: S-W-M-D-K-V. Mark off one blank for each step of damage the character takes – that is, mark the first blank when the character is Snafued, the second for a wound and so on.

The conditions are not a progression of successive states. If a character is down, that doesn't necessarily mean he's also wounded or maimed. Instead, the conditions are ranked by the character's ability to influence the game. A downed character is only barely more able to affect events than is a killed character. Vaporised characters have hardly any chance to influence the situation, unless maybe a mist of their blood lands in someone's eyes.

Damage conditions

Okay means okay.

Snafued means the target is unhurt but was distracted into making some kind of mistake. Maybe he messed up his aim and missed shooting his own teammate by a hair, or he tripped, or something fell on him. The target cannot attack in the

next round, because he's busy sorting himself out. He can run, hide, make a phone call or rationally debate various strategies while laser blasts fly around him. He just can't attack. At the end of the next round he is no longer Snafued.

Wounded means the target is Snafued in his next action *and also* requires first aid, drugs or the oh-so-attentive care of an Alpha Complex docbot. The player cannot spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of this round or the next round. At the end of his next action the character is no longer Snafued but is still wounded.

Maimed means the target is Snafued in the next round *and also* one of his limbs becomes useless or absent. The player cannot spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of the scene. The Snafu goes away after his next action but the maiming stays.

Down means the target is immobile and basically incapacitated. A downed character is not necessarily wounded or maimed. As with maimed, the player cannot spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of the scene. If you allow it, the downed character may still speak and listen groggily, point an accusing finger or weakly pull a

trigger. Possibly the downed character's perceptions are distorted so he witnesses events unreliably.

Killed means dead. The player can spend Perversity normally on other players' rolls.

Vaporised means the target permanently and irrevocably Goes Away, reduced to a thick red spray, component body cells or conceivably subatomic particles. The player can still spend Perversity on others' rolls. Being vaporised is a significant accomplishment generally recognised by a brief but heartfelt round of applause.

Cumulative (or not) damage

Snafus are not cumulative. If you are Snafued while already Snafued, you don't get doubly penalised.

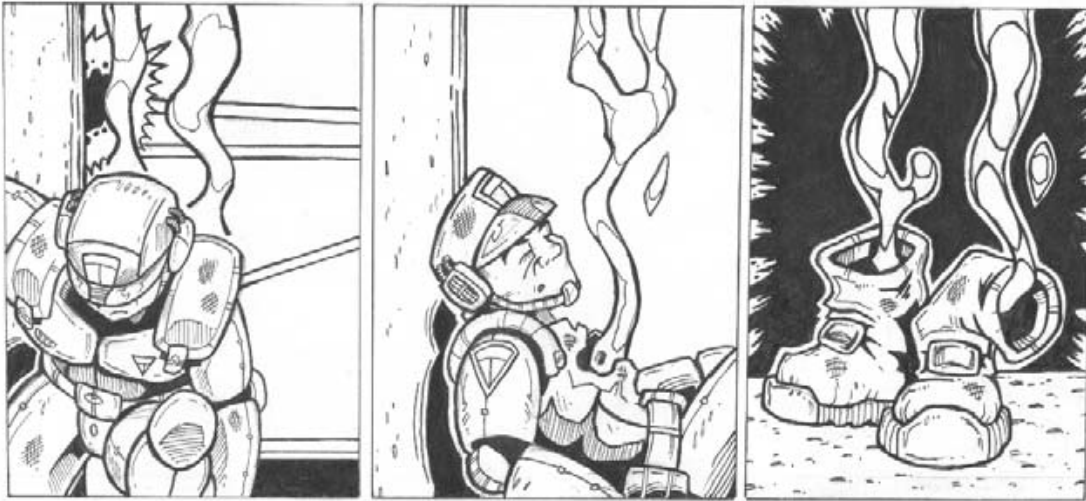
Damage beyond Snafued is cumulative. So, if you are Wounded and you get Wounded again, you are now Maimed. Wounding moves you on one step towards Killed, Maimed moves you on two steps, Down moves you on three steps, which means a Wounded character who's then Downed is dead.

Technically, if you are Wounded after you are Killed, then your body is Vaporised but really, that is a technicality beyond

16. DAMAGE AND INJURIES



'OK, Snafued, Hurt, Maimed, Down, Killed, Vapourised. Not pictured: Toasty.'



the ability of the recently deceased to care about.

Recovering from damage
You decide how long a character takes to heal damage. Here is some guidance:

Snafued characters recover from the Snafu at the end of the next round.

Injuries can sometimes be healed at the end of the current combat. Docbots and medikits provide plastiflesh and repair nanobots that can zip up a flesh wound, no problem. Broken bones are harder, requiring days of bed rest in a medibed as nanobots painstakingly build up layers of bone cells. Either way, the team's Happiness Officer should ensure that the injured team-mate can happily participate in the rest of the mission by giving him enough painkillers to light up an elephant.

Maimed limbs can be regenerated in a week or replaced by high-tech mechanical prosthetics in a shorter time. No, nothing ever goes wrong with a prosthetic limb, like for instance evil Secret Society programming that makes the limb lash out wildly at the society's enemies. How could you even think that?

Downed characters revive in a minute or less if aided or in 10 minutes without aid.

Recently **killed** and still attractive characters of Clearance **BLUE** or above can sometimes be revived with diligent attention from Tech Services. No one bothers below Clearance **BLUE** or after about 10 minutes, or without sufficient body material to make revival an exciting prospect. Revival of the dead is a less

costly and more trouble-free alternative to activating a new clone.

If a **vaporised** character's player wants to recover, laugh brightly and chide him for being a smartass.

Damaging objects

Troubleshooters routinely need or at least they try, to destroy bots, equipment, doors, walls, delicate Old Reckoning china and other physical objects. Let these objects perish according to the needs of the mission, with attention to dramatic effect rather than to strict results dictated by materials engineering. If you like, you can instead carry out experiments around the house. Try your own home slugthrower on common household objects like vacuum cleaners and TVs. That's what we game designers do.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

If that doesn't strike your fancy, take guidance from the suggested rules for damaging characters but substitute these conditions: **Okay, Lightly damaged, Impaired, Heavily damaged, Busted, Junked, Vaporised.**

Okay still means okay.

Lightly damaged means the object is banged up, scratched, dented or chipped but basically unharmed. A lightly damaged wall has scuffed paint.

Impaired means the object's function is visibly messed up. An X-ray machine or reactor leaks radiation; a radio squawks. An impaired wall has one or more serious cracks.

Heavily damaged means the object is barely functional. A scrubot weakly squirts a stream of soap; the voice on the phone is barely audible; the confession booth seems to think your name is Amelia Earhart. A heavily damaged wall has a hole big enough to crawl through.

Busted means the object won't work but it can be repaired within the same scene with a good skill roll. A busted wall has a hole big enough to drive an autocar through.

Junked means destroyed.

Vaporised, again, deserves a brief round of applause, unless the former object was vital experimental equipment entrusted to the Troubleshooters by The Computer. In this case a quick conference is in order to get everyone's story straight before debriefing.

Clone replacement

The MemoMax Constant Realtime Update Program (CRUP) system records every Troubleshooter's memories and perceptions in realtime and stores them.

Technical Services supervises the stored memories in gigantic data warehouses jammed floor-to-ceiling with eerily quiet data storage racks.

MemoMax circuitry installed in each citizen's brain – including that of the Prime; the original person – has what is appropriately called a 'dead-man switch'. When a Troubleshooter dies during a mission and his brain ceases functioning, the MemoMax circuits automatically alert The Computer. The Computer activates the character's next clone backup, which floats comatose in the Tech Services forced-growth clone tanks. Reasonably skilled Tech Services biotechnicians, popularly called 'rebooters,' read into the new brain the MemoMax 'braintape' recording of the previous body's memories. The new body emerges looking the same and has all the memories, skills, attributes and physical abilities of the old. The formerly-dead citizen experiences only a brief disorientation and then is ready to resume duty.

Don't think about it

If you know anything at all about biology, you are now probably wondering whether the previous paragraph was, in fact, the most ridiculous thing you've ever read. Wait, it gets more so!

The replacement clone not only has the same physical abilities but The Computer generously allots this new citizen his predecessor's exact inventory of equipment, sometimes even rare experimental equipment. The intent is to make the new clone identical in all respects to the precursor.

Previous editions of **PARANOIA** offered a transparently bogus rationale for why all clones are identical in all features. In fact, the section was titled 'Why Clones Are Identical in All Features: The Transparently Bogus Rationale.' (If you think we're making that up, you haven't grasped **PARANOIA** yet.)

In fact, GMs and players seem content to accept the clone setup for what it is: a brute-force fix to let players keep playing **PARANOIA** missions despite the game's extreme lethality. Get killed? So what?

Like the *Star Trek* transporter, it's a story device. Nobody wonders about the cloning system in Alpha Complex, for the same reason nobody wonders how Wile E. Coyote can get hit with an anvil and bounce back in the cartoon's next scene.

That is why, among all the experimental equipment blowing up and the infrastructure breaking down across Alpha Complex, the cloning system just works. If it didn't just work, players would have to create new characters many times in a play session and that gets old fast.

Introducing a backup

Get the newly activated clone backup body (and his player) to the action as soon as possible. A player with a dead character is just a spectator, which is nowhere near as much fun as playing. A waiting player can still spend Perversity points to influence other players' rolls, if you let him but remember: He showed up to play, not to watch.

Owing to priority transport assignments, the backup clone can usually don his reflex overalls, grab his supplies, jump on a truckbot and arrive panting to join his teammates in the next scene.

Now, if the mission takes place Outdoors, or beneath the ocean, or on a shuttle for Mars, delivery may take longer. Conceivably these far-flung Troubleshooters got assigned their own Porta-Tank clone grower but that may be a stretch. Even if the survivors have to sit on their hands for a few hours or days, you may still want to halt the action until the backup makes the scene. The Computer can always order the team to take no further action until

16. DAMAGE AND INJURIES

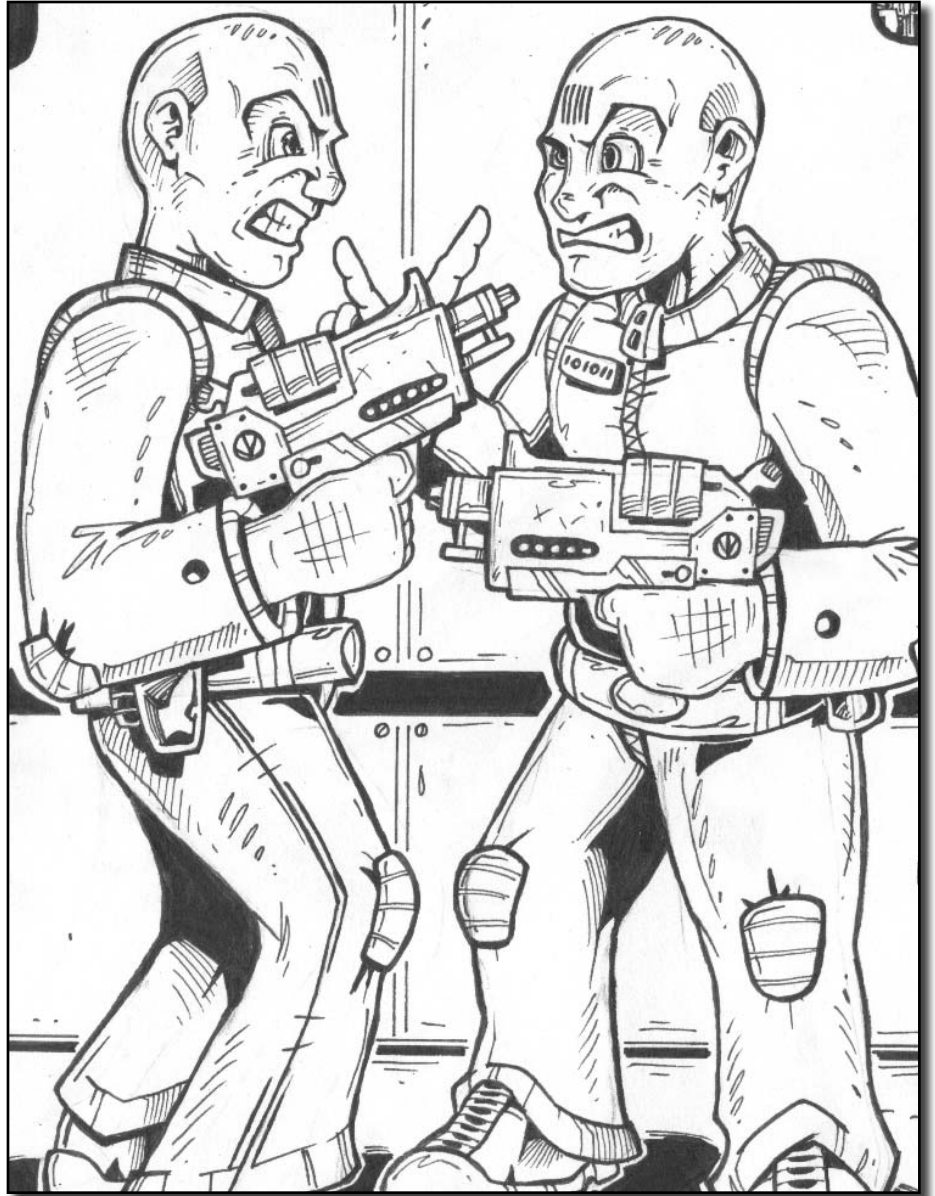
further notice. The Computer won't let a mission fail just because the group is understaffed.

Mission Group Beta Niner: Regrets in re tragic messy death of Bob-O. Clone backup in transit. Stand by until backup arrival. While standing around, why not clean up mess?

Do not introduce the backup until it suits your fancy. Perhaps the team should struggle along under strength for a while. Perhaps the currently-dead player should observe a decent period of mourning for the deceased character. Be unpredictable, even capricious. Never let the players know what to expect.

Perhaps the backup got mistakenly routed to the food vats. Perhaps someone sabotaged communications back at headquarters. Or maybe the flybot delivering the backup broke its GPS unit and is now diligently educating the clone in dental hygiene as it streaks across the tundra toward the North Pole.

You never can tell.



'When clone backups go bad.'



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Back in the saddle again!

Though the conceit of clones allows play to continue promptly even after widespread death and destruction, there remains the problem of, if you will, clone insertion. That is to say Tech Services spits out another clone but how does the clone get from the forced-growth tanks to the party?

In reality, this would take some time, right? I mean, even hopping in the car and going down to the 7-11 takes at least a quarter hour. If you are feeling particularly annoyed at the recently-deceased player, you can certainly make him sit out of the game for a while before announcing that his clone walks up, hands in his jumpsuit pockets and whistling.

Nobody likes having to sit around picking his nose or munching corn chips morosely while other people are having a good time. So here are a bunch of cheesy ideas for getting the clone backup promptly to the party and back into the action.

Emergency transtube

The transtubes run throughout Alpha Complex (well, at least in sectors in reasonably good repair). Think of a subway system with individual cars that seat a dozen or so that can be dispatched to arbitrary destinations. Though even REDs can use the transtube system, this usually means sitting around for long periods of time while the doors open at every local stop. For high priority missions, however, The Computer orders a single-person capsule, rerouting everyone else or shunting them onto sidings, while the replacement clone roars through the tubes to the transtube station nearest the PCs.

Pneumatic tube delivery

The Computer instructs the PCs to go to a nearby booth to await clone insertion. With a hiss of air and a 'chunk,' a capsule slams into the booth from an overhead tube and the door opens. The clone staggers out, disoriented and quite queasy.

The Sewer Emergence Table

That is an actual table in *Advanced Squad Leader*, God help the ginks who play it. We don't actually have one, of course, but the PCs are standing around waiting for the new clone when a nearby manhole cover slides aside, a **BLUE** environment-suited tech wearing a gas mask pokes his head out, looks around, and says 'There you go, buddy,' then disappears, to be replaced by the new clone, looking quite nauseated and smelling a bit, climbing up the ladder from the manhole.

One clone, hold the anchovies

An **ORANGE** Clearance delivery man from Domin-O's, a PLC service firm, zooms up on a jet-propelled forklift. On the fork is the new clone, encased in – umm – well, we imagine *carbonite* is a Registered Trademark of Lucasfilm, Ltd., so – uh – *alphamite*, that's the ticket! – a hard plastic-like substance tinted the clone's Security Clearance colour.

The technician is chewing on a toothpick, produces a clipboard and insists that the team leader must sign, acknowledging 'safe receipt' of the clone before he will lower the fork lift, back away and use a laser cutter to remove the carboni – um, alphamite.

Is the clone actually safely received? Up to you, of course but probably, unless the player has been annoying you recently. Doesn't really matter; either way, the team leader has already signed and is solely responsible. The clone emerges, weak as a kitten for a few minutes until the effects wear off – he can crawl around on hands and knees after the other PCs until he feels stronger.

(Yes, Domin-O's usually delivers food but they also have the best delivery system in the Complex and has won the most recent contract for clone delivery as well.)

ICBCIM (Inter-Continental Ballistic Clone Insertion Missile)

Particularly useful in missions to the Outdoors, this can get a clone anywhere on the planet within 90 minutes – but given that most missions to the Outdoors are likely to be within a few hundred miles of Alpha Complex, we are probably talking a couple of minutes at most. A fiery lance appears overhead with a sonic boom, there's an explosion as the clone capsule separates and it drifts gently down toward the PCs at the end of a parachute. Or maybe it drifts over in the direction of a swamp a couple of miles off. Or maybe the chute fails to open and the PCs have to scatter as the capsule slams into the earth nearby, excavating a sizable crater and turning the clone inside into a sort of jelly.

16. DAMAGE AND INJURIES

Thaw out another backup, Jacko(bot)

For an extended mission into faraway abandoned sectors, The Computer, in its wisdom, may decide to send the PCs out with their own backups, in case of accidental loss or erasure. They are stacked in coldsleep pods in the back of the crawler or copter or whatever and when you need a new clone, you just go back and thaw one out. Thawing is something like microwaving and happens pretty quickly, although the clone shivers uncontrollably for several minutes afterwards. The process is foolproof and completely safe for everyone. Clones never suffer brain damage, equipment malfunction or nerve injury that causes intermittent shooting pains in their trigger fingers at inconvenient moments. Well, hardly ever.

Just find me some meat

Information is, of course, much easier to transmit than matter. At times, perhaps the PCs are assigned an experimental MEMPRESSION bot. Just take, say, a Commie Mutant Traitor, cram him into the convenient compartment and close the lid. The Membot erases the traitor's Wetware and downloads the PC's last recorded personality into the traitor. Open the lid and – well, it's not exactly a clone but it has the memories and skills of the recently-dead PC.

The erasure process is well understood and easily implemented and there are hardly ever problems with multiple personalities in the same body, or Commie Mutant Traitors driving the new personality out and turning against the PCs.

Of course, you may not always be able to find a Commie Mutant Traitor at the right moment and It Would Be Wrong just to grab a hapless nearby **INFRARED** and cram him into the bot. At least, without first manufacturing... we mean, uncovering evidence of the **INFRARED**'s dire treason against The Computer and everything we hold dear.

In the Outdoors, perhaps all you can find is a squirrel or bunny rabbit. Or a giant radioactive mutant cockroach. (Well, not too giant – it has to fit into the Membot's compartment.)

If you *really* can't find any meat, maybe you can skip the erasure step and just download the dead PC into the brain of one of the still-living Troubleshooters. They can share the body for a while, at least until you do capture a Commie Mutant Traitor somewhere. Or maybe for a long time. In fact, we kind of like the idea of ultimately having the entire party sharing a single clone body, bickering about what to do next, with the contradictory instructions of each of his personalities making the body twitch in St. Vitus's dance.

Freeze-dried clone

The human body is 90% water, right? You know those sponges that are flat as a board when you get them but expand to be a normal sponge when you stick them in water? Or those little plastic toy animals that grow to 10 times their normal size when you leave them in a cup of water overnight? Well, this is like that. Just take one of the freeze-dried clones, add water, stick the MEMPRESSION helmet on to download memories and personality and Bob-B's your uncle.

So – uh, how could such an absurd technology possibly work? What's your Security Clearance again? Anyway, just wave your hands and say 'nano' a lot. Busy little nanobots, always a good spurious justification for anything.

Let 10⁴ clone delivery systems blossom

Make up your own. We don't care. In fact, we encourage it.

For a while, you may find it fun to turn clone insertion into a running gag, using a new system with every death. After a while, that will get boring and you may just want to stick with one. (And how does that Domin-O guy manage to zoom through the middle of a firefight, completely unscathed, to deliver the new clone? Who knows? But they're always on time, or your clone is free.) Except, perhaps, when the particular constraints of a mission (We're going to Mars!) makes the normal method difficult and you invent some fiendish new experimental way.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

17. Attributes

Players know every human character in Alpha Complex has two attributes: *Access* and *Power*. Knowledge of any character's specific attribute ratings below **ULTRAVIOLET** Clearance is treason.

As described in the Player section, **Access** helps get things done in the Alpha Complex bureaucracy. Players *do not* know their Access can also be their 'treason armour'; damage from a character's treasonous acts reduces his Access before condemning him to termination.

Power describes the strength of a character's mutant power. Players don't know it but Power can also work (if you want it to) as a general 'luck' attribute.

Attribute ratings

Each attribute has a numerical rating from 1 (low) to 20 (high).

To determine a beginning Troubleshooter's Power rating, roll 1d20 and record the result; if you roll less than 8, record 8.

Determine his Access rating by rolling 1d20 and dividing the number rolled by 4 (round fractions up); record the result as the character's starting Access rating.

Track each PC's attribute ratings secretly during play. Remember, players can never show knowledge of their own or anyone's attribute ratings.

Attributes in play

You can use a character's attribute ratings to help you decide the success or failure of relevant actions. When a character tries to use his mutant power or Access to affect the storyline, you can use the character's attribute rating number as his success chance. Roll 1d20. If the roll equals the attribute rating or less, the action succeeds. If the roll is higher, the action fails.

Access

You can use a character's Access rating as a default 'get something done' skill when none of the actual skills apply. A

Troubleshooter needs to locate, right now, this sector's nearest warehouse for jackobot gripper attachments. (A reason why the character would need to know this outlandish fact is left as an exercise for the GM.) If you have not already decided whether he finds it, what do you roll? None of the skills cover warehousing trivia.

When no skill seems to apply to a situation but a character's knowledge of Alpha Complex would help, make an Access roll. Bounce a d20 and compare the result to the character's current Access rating. If you roll the rating or less, the character has found some inside contact or obscure net source that helps resolve the problem. (Did this involve treasonous activity? Aww, why not?)

Use the roll's margin to see how well the character managed to call in favours: One Troubleshooter asks a Service Group co-worker for information about the jackobot warehouse. The player's roll has a margin of 0, meaning the character gets rambling, mostly-correct directions he can just about use.

Another Troubleshooter makes the same call. The player gets a margin of 12 and up rolls a chartered autocar limo, complete with a Coffeelike maker and vidshows, to whisk his group to the proper warehouse in speed and quiet.

Even a successful Access roll should complicate the Troubleshooter's life. Maybe his connections point him to the right contact but that contact demands a favour in return. Maybe the Troubleshooter wanders into the wrong office, is mistaken for an Internal Security agent and is assigned a new secret mission. Failed Access rolls can be even more chaotic. Don't let the Troubleshooter run into a bureaucratic brick wall. Instead, drop him into a bureaucratic quagmire, where he thinks that just one more effort will get him what he wants but really all he is accomplishing is digging deeper into the mire. Roll on the Bureaucratic Quagmire table on page 57 if you are stuck for inspiration.

Treason armour: Access works like 'treason armour' because, through backchannel connections and quiet

influence, it reduces the significance and danger of accusations of treason. However, as the Troubleshooter becomes less trusted by The Computer, his former allies and contacts become less willing to associate with him. See Treason on page 72.

Power

Power attribute rating points work as a fuel supply for mutant powers. When a character uses his mutant power, he's spending points from his Power attribute. When he runs out, the power goes *pffft*. The points regenerate – slowly or quickly, as you prefer.

When a character tries to use a mutant power, if you know what you want the power to do (or not do), that's what it does (or doesn't do). If you don't care to decide what's most entertaining, or if you're distracted, use these rules to aid your creativity.

When the character tries to use the power, have the player tell what he hopes will occur, then roll 1d20.

If you roll a number equal to the character's Power attribute rating or less, the mutant power functions properly, doing more or less what the player wants it to do, depending on the margin of success. A small margin means a pathetically small manifestation of the power (the pyrokinetic's target feels a bit warm); a big margin means the effect is bigger and more dangerous than anticipated (the pyrokinetic's target explodes in a huge fireball that takes out everyone in the room).

If you roll a number greater than the rating, the mutant power does not work. If you roll way higher than the rating, like 5 or more over, or if you roll a 20, the PC's mutant power works to, um, different effect. Actually, why mince words? The power backfires like the Bay of Pigs. The nature of the backfire depends on the mutation. A mutant with Regeneration might grow a few extra fingers or an extra head or something. A Pyrokinetic might set his own hair on fire.

If you want, Power can also measure a character's luck. To use Power this way,

Bureaucratic Quagmire

Roll	Quagmire
1	Paperwork. <i>You don't have form 5443/c. No-one has form 5443/c. I'm not even sure if it exists. But you don't have one, so I can't do anything for you.</i> Lots of paperwork. If you have some random forms to hand, drown the Troubleshooter in them. Otherwise, assume the character is out of play for a while as he fills in dozens of forms. In triplicate.
2	IOU. <i>Sure, buddy. Say, got your laser handy?</i> The Troubleshooter can get what he needs but will owe someone a favour. A big favour. A favour that they may call in at any time.
3	Runaround. <i>There's just one small problem...</i> The Troubleshooter cannot get what he needs here in the Office of Strategic Resource Allocation but if he just pops over to the Office of Resource Allocation Strategies, they can give him the form he needs for the Resource Allocator of Strategic Offices...
4	Mistaken Identity. <i>Ah! Welcome! We have been expecting you.</i> The Troubleshooter is mistaken for someone else, usually someone much more important. He's given what he needs immediately, no questions asked and praised for his devotion to duty and his heroism in taking on such a difficult and dangerous mission. Why, he's an inspiration to us all!
5	Added Fees. <i>There's a small handling fee associated with your request.</i> And a bribe of a few hundred credits. And shipping costs. Oh, and there's an, er, Keyboard Hygiene fee. Yeah. Gotta pay that first.
6	Stalled. <i>We're waiting on the part.</i> The Troubleshooter can get what he needs. Unfortunately, he will have to wait until the next geological epoch before it's delivered.
7	Witness. <i>Nobody saw nothin', ok?</i> The Troubleshooter witnesses some act of treason. If he keeps his mouth shut, he can get what he needs. If he reports the treachery, then he loses any benefit from the Access roll.
8	Security Sweep. <i>Please accompany us to the confession booth, citizen.</i> The Troubleshooter is picked up by a random security sweep. Internal Security don't know if he's done anything wrong but everyone's a suspect, so the Troubleshooter is dragged off and interrogated about a nameless, non-specific crime until he breaks.
9	Bureaucratic Mixup. <i>Here's the 20 kilos of plutonium and the YELLOW ribbon you requested.</i> The Troubleshooter doesn't get exactly what he asked for. In fact, he gets something else entirely.
10	I Can Do It, But... <i>I know you asked for a left-handed blivet adjuster, but here's a right-handed blivet adjuster and the number of a docbot who'll swap your arms around and won't ask questions.</i> The Troubleshooter gets part of what he needs, along with some patently ludicrous and inadequate replacement for the rest.
11	Unwanted Bonus! <i>Congratulations! As the 50,000th citizen to order from us, we are pleased to give you a free PetBot!</i> Or a crate of Cherri-flavoured B3. Or a one-way ticket to FUD Sector. Refusing this bonus is not permitted, so the Troubleshooter has to carry whatever junk he's just been given.
12	Systems Failure. <i>It is pitch dark. You are likely to be eaten by a clerk.</i> Something goes wrong with Alpha Complex's internal workings, such as the power, lights, air cycling, computer networks or the pneumatic tubes. Until the Troubleshooters fix this problem, all Access is useless.
13	Unlikely Crossover. <i>Hey, you're the Commie Mutant Traitor!</i> While pursuing an unrelated use of Access, the Troubleshooter runs across some key clue or Non-Player Character related to the mission.
14	Bizarre Encounter. <i>Just have this form signed by the cockroach and you're done</i> The Troubleshooter wanders into a bizarre section of Alpha Complex, one that he has never seen before and will never be able to find again.
15	Suspiciously Fine. <i>Certainly, sir, Here you go. Have a nice daycycle.</i> The Troubleshooter gets what he needs promptly, safely and without further consequence. It's terrifying.
16	Accidental Treason. <i>Citizen, you violated Procurement Regulation 2775a, paragraph 3, section c. If you confess and identify your co-conspirators, we may be... lenient.</i> The Troubleshooter has unwittingly committed treason. Perhaps one of his contacts is a traitor, or he's accepted stolen goods, or he just didn't read that End User Agreement closely enough. Either way, he just got some Treason Points and doesn't know why.
17	Secret Society Scrutiny. <i>You will be contacted by our agent.</i> The Troubleshooter's request has drawn the attention of a Secret Society agent. What treasonous scheme has he run into? For the rest of the mission, he'll be watched by the Secret Society – whenever he rolls under a scene's Tension, he's spotted by an agent of the society.
18	IntSec Scrutiny. <i>No doubt you have an alibi, citizen. We want to know why you have an alibi. After all, an innocent man wouldn't need an alibi.</i> Internal Security suspects the Troubleshooter of being a traitor. For the rest of the mission, he's under IntSec scrutiny – whenever he rolls under a scene's Tension, he's spotted by IntSec.
19	Computer Scrutiny. <i>Hello, citizen. Your behaviour is outside your predicted range. Do you feel unwell? Would you like some medication?</i> The Computer contacts the Troubleshooter, demanding he explain recent odd actions. For the rest of the mission, The Computer is watching him closely. Whenever he rolls under a scene's Tension, he's spotted by Friend Computer.
20	Roll again twice and combine both results.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

roll 1d20 in a situation when you want to see if the character is lucky. Compare the number rolled to the character's Power rating. If you roll the rating or less, the character is lucky; the wider the margin, the better the luck. This catchall function can come in handy. Generally luck is an unhelpful notion in **PARANOIA**. Anyone genuinely lucky would not live in Alpha Complex. Using Power this way also means big-time powerful mutants are for some mysterious reason luckier than ordinary shleps. Then again, why not? A guy who can burn things at a touch – he can pretty much make his own luck, can't he?

Attribute drain

Once you decide the character succeeds in using an attribute, you may then, if you wish, deduct ('drain') points from his attribute rating. When you drain points, the rating temporarily goes down. For instance, if a character has Access 8 and you deduct 3 points, his Access falls to 5.

This drain represents the character either (a) cashing in favours to make headway in the bureaucracy or (b) expending mental force to fuel his mutant power. The more powerful the mental effort or the more significant the favours, the more points you can deduct from the relevant attribute rating.

Drain points from a character's attribute rating only after you determine whether his action succeeded. The number of points you drain indicates the effort he put in to achieve success – or failure.

The strong stay strong, the mediocre perish: Use the roll's margin – the amount by which the roll succeeded or failed – as your guide in draining points. Does big-time success cost more points than fiddly little sort-of success? No! That would be justice, a concept with no place in **PARANOIA**.

Remember the jackobot warehouse example in the Access section? In that case you would drain the Troubleshooter's Access rating by more points for the rambling directions (margin 0) than for

the limo (margin 12). Big success means, well, big success – an utter lack of grief or consequences. Close success means the character used up his favour and now faces untold suspense and anxiety.

This system means privileged characters with high Access and Power can routinely expect wonderful things to happen without long-term consequences. Unfortunates with no particular connections or low Power will struggle constantly. That's life in Alpha Complex, among other places.

Running out of points

A character whose attribute is drained to 0 experiences temporary setbacks – no one returns his calls or he has a splitting headache and cannot concentrate on mutation stuff.

A cruel GM might impose additional penalties. This hypothetical unfeeling Gamemaster might decide a zero-Access character makes bad blunders that actively offend some high Clearance citizen. This heartless GM, if there were such a one, might decree a zero-Power character becomes the unluckiest citizen in Alpha Complex.

Really, just contemplating what this imaginary GM might devise for his unwitting victims makes us shudder. We are glad you would never stoop to such temptation.

When you replenish the character's attribute points or when the character dies horribly from disfavour or bad luck, all penalties go away.

Replenishing attribute points

Both attributes are restored to their starting levels at the start of a new mission. You can restore one or both of an individual player's attributes if he seems to be lagging behind or just ignore his current ratings and simply decide he'll succeed more often.

You can also offer chances to recharge attributes. A character without Access might be contacted by a Secret Society

or other conspirator, offering help (and more Access) in exchange for a little termination on the side, while Power can be replenished by drugs, adrenaline, sheer terror, radiation or by coming up with such a cruel and treacherous use of a mutant power that it tickles the GM's funny bone. Or dying – a fresh clone has a fresh allocation of Power.

Adjusting attribute ratings

In a one-shot mission you need not worry about changing attribute ratings. In a longer set of missions, especially in Straight games, the players will feel more interested if they see their attributes work better over time. Then they will feel alarm to see the attributes suddenly working worse than before. To create these effects, raise and lower the PCs' attribute ratings.

Consider raising a PC's Access by 1 (to a maximum of 20) in these situations:

- Each time he's promoted to a Security Clearance he has not held previously.
- He has pulled off an impressive bureaucratic triumph or has earned a favour from a high Clearance citizen. ('Yes, Jonah-V, sir, this is the vandal who broke your showerhead. Confess to Jonah-V, traitor!')
- He's just extracted a favour from another citizen through persuasion, intimidation, blackmail and so forth.
- When rolling against his Access, for whatever reason, you roll a 1. The PC has demonstrated such elegant flair; he has caught the attention of someone high up.

Consider lowering a PC's Access rating by 1 or more (to a minimum of 1) in these situations:

- He offends a higher Clearance citizen of Clearance **GREEN** or higher.
- When rolling against his Access, for whatever reason, you roll a 20. The PC has bungled so badly he's caught the attention of someone high up.
- He's suspected of treason by Internal Security and is therefore socially radioactive.

18. SKILLS AND SPECIALTIES

☞ He's strapped for credits and lives at a lower Clearance than people expect. Temporarily reduce his Access rating to 1 until he resumes his higher Clearance life.

Consider raising a PC's Power by 1 (to a maximum of 20) in these situations:

☞ When making a mutant power roll,

you roll a 1. The PC is getting the hang of his treasonous ability.

☞ The PC gets exposed to dangerous radiation, weird experimental Super-Serum, genetic re-engineering or other comic-book devices.

☞ [Optional:] The PC studies intensively for at least one hour with an NPC who has the same mutant power

and a higher Power rating. (As an even more optional rule, you can let an NPC in the same circumstances teach the PC a new mutant power. The Secret Society Psion actively tutors mutants in new powers.)

Consider lowering a PC's Power by 1 (to a minimum of 8) if, when making a mutant power roll, you roll a 20. The PC's power backfires badly.

18. Skills and Specialties

All characters can use all six skills in the game. A character uses a Specialty he has at his Specialty rating. If he does not have the Specialty, he uses the rating of the governing skill. A character has a rating between 0 (low) and 20 (high) with each skill or specialty. Do not hesitate to modify ratings in accordance with the player's charm.

When a character uses a skill or Specialty, his player rolls 1d20; roll the die yourself in secret if you want to keep the player guessing. If the number rolled is less than or equal to the character's rating, he succeeds.

However, a roll of 20, though not an automatic failure, means something bad happens. Even if the character succeeds, an unforeseen side-effect taints his triumph. For instance, if a sharpshooter character has an Energy Weapons Specialty of 18 and his player spends a bunch of Perversity points to raise his success roll to 20, there's no way the character will miss plugging the jackobot on the gantryway overhead. But if he rolls 20, the jackobot might (for instance) blow up, causing the gantryway to collapse on the hapless sharpshooter.

Roleplay it out

In many cases players may try to use a skill or Specialty to resolve a situation which really ought to be roleplayed. For example, if a character wants to get the IntSec sector supervisor to authorise him to carry a tactical nuclear device, you may want to take the role of the supervisor and haggle with the player. Don't let the player get away with saying, 'Well, I, uh,

use my Bootlicking Specialty.' Tell him he's got to whine and cajole.

Make the success roll yourself, surreptitiously and let the number you roll affect the outcome of the contest. However, also take into account how well the player flatters and how sickeningly he debases himself: If he does a particularly good or bad job, modify his success accordingly.

In general, roleplaying a situation is more satisfying and interesting than simply making success rolls. However, in some circumstances, you won't have a choice; sometimes a player's character is much better at something than the player himself. (Joe might be a terrible bootlicker but his character has a high Bootlicking rating.) In this case, let the success rolls mean more and the roleplaying mean less.

Management specialties

Management is the all-purpose 'behave properly' skill, representing the character's sense of proper and improper comportment in himself and others. Management specialties also apply when a character wants something from another character – Bootlicking when grovelling to a superior, Interrogation when torturing a captive and so on.

These Specialties only work against Non – Player Characters. A Player Character's Bootlicking success has no effect on another PC. To get something

from another PC, the player must persuade the other player himself.

Bootlicking

A bootlicker can influence superiors by fawning and grovelling. The bootlicker's overt displays of eagerness to please and acceptance of authority may be insincere but they must be convincing.

Make a Bootlicking roll when a bootlicker tries to solicit a favour from or avoid the wrath of a citizen of higher Clearance. Success suggests the groveller has made a good impression; whether the favour is granted or the wrath avoided depends on the circumstances but the groveller at least gets the benefit of the doubt. Failure suggests the groveller has made a poor impression, no favour is forthcoming, wrath will fall unabated or even intensified on the groveller and the superior wishes the groveller had never entered his life.

Chutzpah

This Specialty lets the user bluff or brazen out a tense situation through iron nerve. When a user tries to use Chutzpah, have the player make an appropriately chutzpah-laden statement or speech. Then make a hidden Chutzpah roll, modifying the success chance according to the entertainment value of the player's speech. Success suggests the nervy user's sheer force of personality has swayed uncertain NPCs to his side or he has divined an audacious line of reasoning to defuse a situation. Failure suggests he has offended everyone, possibly catastrophically.



TROUBLESHOOTERS



'Management is the most important **PARANOIA** skill.'

Con Games

A confidence artist can fool a target human or bot or convince him (or it) to perform an act not in his own best interests. The con artist may use false or spurious logic, fast talk or cleverly distorted information. When the con artist makes the pitch to the target, make a Con Games roll. Depending on circumstances, a successful roll might fool the target only briefly (the guard pauses long enough to let the con artist get through a door) or for a long time (an interrogator believes the artist's lie justifying treasonous conduct). If the roll fails, the target is usually convinced the user is untrustworthy slime. Often, conning a victim means making several success rolls.

Hygiene

Appropriate regular personal grooming is essential to the happiness of all citizens. The character can identify violations of proper Alpha Complex hygiene procedures and suggest remedial treatment to rectify gross personal cleanliness issues that erode

citizen happiness.

When there are clear problems hampering the success of a mission, or just prior to debriefing sessions, Troubleshooters may well wish to review their personal hygiene. A successful Hygiene roll identifies the acting character's own specific problems, if any. If the character is examining a target character's hygiene, roll a Hygiene-versus-Hygiene (or Management) contest. If the examining character wins, he can identify the target's hygiene problems and either work generously with the target to resolve them or report them to the authorities, as desired. A failed roll may misdiagnose the problem or suggest an entirely unsuitable solution.

The effect of proper hygiene on briefing officers and The Computer we leave up to you but do not underestimate its importance.

Interrogation

An interrogator extracts information from uncooperative prisoners who have already resisted intimidation (see

following). Interrogation supplements intimidation with torture. Of course, those eager to get on with the torture may skip the intimidation phase.

During interrogation, the victim suffers a wound and you make a hidden interrogation roll. If the roll succeeds, you decide whether the victim tells the interrogator the truth or a lie (that is, whatever the interrogator wants to hear); the higher the success margin, the more likely it is the victim tells the truth. If the interrogation success roll fails, the victim gives incorrect information before lapsing into unconsciousness. Anyone can revive him within an hour or so and the interrogator can resume. Success on the second interrogation roll means the victim definitely tells the interrogator whatever it takes to make the torture stop; but a second failure on the interrogation roll means the victim dies.

By the way, 'interrogation' means crude field interrogations. IntSec has vastly more sophisticated techniques involving drugs, brainscrubs and scans so subtle they can uncover things you never knew you knew. These techniques are highly effective but tend to leave their victims useless for anything other than smiling mindlessly and drooling a lot. Only Non-Player Characters have access to IntSec interrogation labs, because **PARANOIA** is about fear and ignorance, not about sadism.

Intimidation

An intimidator can extort favours or cooperation from inferiors – kind of 'reverse bootlicking'. Intimidation generally involves the ruthless display of power and authority. The intimidator can reinforce verbal flourishes with squads of goons, large weapons or the looming presence of The Computer.

Make an Intimidation roll when a character wants something from an NPC of lower Security Clearance. If he succeeds, his target gulps and leaps to. If he fails, the target is uncooperatively passive-aggressive – not actually insubordinate, just unproductive. If you wish, increase the intimidator's success chance if he is using large-calibre weapons, direct orders from The Computer or other demonstrations of might. Decrease it if he is asking his subordinate to violate

18. SKILLS AND SPECIALTIES

orders or do something particularly hazardous.

Moxie

The user can insightfully assess a target NPC's hidden motives, a situation's hidden factors (say, the likelihood of criminal or treasonous activity taking place) or a statement's plausibility. Moxie connotes streetwise (or corridor-wise) experience, savvy and swiftness of uptake. A high-Moxie user has been around the Complex and seen it all. He can shrewdly suss out a target's likely motivations, especially crooked motivations.

When the user tries to discern the hidden underpinnings in an NPC, a situation or a statement, you make a hidden Moxie roll for the user. Success suggests a reasonable assessment of the situation; failure suggests a superficially reasonable but, as it happens, false assessment.

Oratory

Characters use this specialty to rally and direct a group of NPCs using rhetoric and demagoguery. Because it involves mob psychology, Oratory does not work well on individuals; use bootlicking, chutzpah or intimidation instead.

Have the player using the specialty make a speech to the NPC(s). Then make an Oratory roll for the orator, modifying his success chance according to the persuasiveness and emotional power of his player's speech. A successful roll means the target audience takes one important action at the orator's direction. Failure means the oratory was based on incorrect understanding of the audience, making further oratorical attempts more difficult.

Stealth specialties

Stealth works as the all-purpose 'see/not be seen' skill. It connotes awareness, perception and a general sense of where everything is. We use the name 'Stealth' because it fits the sneaky atmosphere of **PARANOIA**.

Concealment

The user can both hide objects on his person or in his environment and detect hidden objects. Someone trying to hide himself uses Sneaking (see page

62) instead of concealment. When a character hides something, make a hidden Concealment roll for the attempt; success suggests no one will spot the object without a Concealment roll of their own. Failure means an observer can readily spot the object.

When a character attempts to detect hidden objects, a successful Concealment roll means he has done so.

Disguise

Disguise conceals a character's identity through make-up, altered body language and adoption of different personal tics. Disguise cannot let a character realistically mimic a specific individual. The character might fool a lazy IntSec **GREEN** goon into thinking he's a High Programmer but could not expect to pass a security checkpoint using a stolen citizen's ME Card.

If you allow it, Disguise also governs changing the appearance of items: painting a laser barrel, altering a barcode, spray painting reflect and so on. This is your call as GM.

When a character disguises himself or a (willing) target, make a hidden skill roll. Success means the disguise is convincing. Failure means the attempt is so poor even a **GREEN** goon would not be fooled; a look in a mirror confirms this. A grievous failure (margin 10+) means the character is completely unaware of how awful the disguise is.

Scam Radar

In contrast to the instinctive generalised paranoia many citizens feel, Scam Radar is a specific, experienced knowledge of scams, known ambushes and surveillance methods. Having obtained his knowledge from lifelong gossip, secret society meetings and underground propaganda leaflets, the character is more acutely aware of specific ways a situation could bring exposure to harm or accusations of treason.

Scam Radar is not 'danger sense.' There is no danger sense in **PARANOIA**. If anyone really had a sort of psychic awareness of imminent peril, it would burn out from overuse.



'Stealth is the most important **PARANOIA** skill.'



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If the character is about to fall into some hidden trap, ambush or scam he might have heard about before, make a hidden Scam Radar roll to see if he recognises danger signals. Success should alert the character and let him react before anyone else even sees anything is coming, whereas failure means either the character believes everything is fine or he mistakes this danger situation for one completely different, for which his response is totally wrong.

Previous editions of **PARANOIA** referred to this skill as 'High Alert'.

Security Systems

Think of this specialty as the high-tech equivalent of lockpicking. Security Systems does not actually let a character pick physical locks (that's the Fine Manipulation specialty under Violence) but Security Systems does defeat electronic locks and alarm systems, penetrate a security perimeter, tap into secure communications channels and so on.

Make a Security Systems roll when a character attempts to establish security around a physical location, set of data or person, or to break through such security. Generally a successful roll means the character has succeeded. However, when PCs are involved on both sides, you may prefer to resolve the situation as a specialty-vs-specialty contest.

Shadowing

Think of this as the high-tech equivalent of 'tailing'. Make a hidden Shadowing roll when a character tries to follow someone unnoticed. Success means the target notices nothing. Failure means the target may have noticed he is under surveillance. Make a hidden Surveillance roll for the target; success means he has caught on, whereas failure means he has not noticed his observer's slip.

Sleight of Hand

The character can palm and pocket small things, switch objects faster than the eye can follow and drop items into other people's clothes or bags without being noticed.

When a character tries to covertly lift or drop something, make a hidden Sleight of Hand roll. Success indicates no one spotted the action; failure means

the character fluffed the attempt and dropped his palmed currency disk with a noticeable clatter. When the character tries this sneaky against another character, secretly roll an opposed Sleight of Hand contest. If the acting character loses the contest, the target catches him red-handed (or other clearance colour-handed).

Sneaking

A character uses Sneaking to move quietly or avoid observation in a crowd, or to spot characters that are doing this. Success means a good sneak; failure means the sneaker believes he's sneaking fine but any casual observer can spot him.

Surveillance

This is the science and art of installing and detecting bugging devices and using monitoring systems to observe, clandestinely or openly, target individuals, locations or devices. Make a hidden Surveillance roll when a character checks for bugs, installs bugs and so on. Success suggests the character either finds bugs (they are in most places in Alpha Complex) or determines there are

none; you may wish to reduce the scene's Tension level to represent the detected bugs. If you are feeling rulesy, reduce the Tension by the success margin of the Surveillance roll (minimum 1).

A failed Surveillance roll means the character finds no bugs; a bad failure means if there are any bugs, the character has definitely alerted the eavesdropper something is up. Increase the scene's Tension level appropriately, perhaps by the failure margin of the Surveillance roll.

Violence specialties

Violence is the all-purpose physical fitness skill; anything a character does to physically affect the scene is, in **PARANOIA**, an act of Violence. (We call it 'Violence' instead of 'fitness' or something because it fits the game's atmosphere and because the act almost always turns out violent anyway.)

Violence includes all uses of weapons. However, a Violence specialty with a weapon governs only use of (attacking



'Violence is the most important **PARANOIA** skill.'

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with) that weapon, not creation, maintenance or repair of the weapon. For these tasks use the Weapon and Armour Maintenance specialties of the Hardware skill.

Agility

Rapid or balanced movement, gymnastics, jumping, rock climbing and other feats that contort the body. Particularly skilful applications of Agility, like yoga or juggling, usually work better as narrow specialties.

Demolition

This specialty reflects training and experience in the use of explosives and improvised use of exploding weapons, munitions, volatile substances and other stuff to blow things up.

This skill is legally available only at **GREEN** Clearance or above.

Energy Weapons

How to use lasers, blasters and sonic pistols and rifles. Any energy weapon beyond these is probably some funky R&D contraption. Flamethrowers and the like are covered by the Field Weapons specialty.

Field Weapons

How to use flamethrowers, gauss guns, tanglers, stun guns, plasma rifles and hand flamers – anything that creates an effect shaped like a cone, spray, line or similar field.

Fine Manipulation

This specialty covers any fiddly little task of manual dexterity, such as physical lockpicking (as opposed to defeating electronic security, which falls under the Stealth specialty Security Systems).

Hand Weapons

How to use force swords, neurowhips, truncheons, clubs, knives, swords, maces, hockey sticks, baseball bats, blenders or a sock full of ball bearings as weapons.

Projectile Weapons

How to use slugthrowers, automatic slugthrowers, cone rifles, ice guns and needle guns, as well as experimental weapons that shoot physical ammo. If you are feeling generous when the Troubleshooters are Outdoors, you can let the same specialty apply to bows and crossbows.

Thrown Weapons

The ability to hit someone at a distance with grenades, bricks or rocks. Rocks are uncommon in Alpha Complex but rubble tends to appear where Troubleshooters are active and that counts. In Outdoors missions involving primitive weapons, this specialty can also cover spears and thrown daggers, if you want.

Unarmed Combat

The ability to use hands, feet and teeth in combat. Armed Forces troopers and Internal Security **GREEN** goons are impressively good with their fists. Among typical citizens in other Service Groups, an unarmed fight usually looks like a third-grade schoolyard playground brawl. Martial arts are basically unknown in Alpha Complex, except for a few high-ranking, hard-core Humanists. Some Romantics practice a sort of showy pretend martial art based on Old Reckoning Hong Kong action movies but they tend to die quickly.

Vehicular Combat

How to use aimed weapons mounted on vehicles, including laser cannons, tube cannons, sonic blasters and wave-motion guns; field weapons such as smoke generators, chaff-casters, gaussers and other neat stuff; and launched weapons, including drop tubes, missile racks and gas throwers.

A particularly rulesy Gamemaster could break this apart into three different specialties but any GM looking for that much realism has probably stopped reading by now and gone on to a less aggressively cheesy game than

PARANOIA.

In the name of the Benefactor, therefore, we proclaim to all numbers of the One State: Everyone who feels capable of doing so must compose tracts, odes, manifestos, poems or other works extolling the beauty and the grandeur of the One State. This will be the first cargo to be carried by the Integral. Long live the One State, long live the numbers, long live the Benefactor! — Yevgeny Zamyatin (tr. Mirra Ginsburg), We [1921-22]

Hardware specialties

Engineering specialties

The Hardware skill governs five engineering specialties: chemical, electronic, habitat, mechanical and nuclear. Habitat Engineering figures in missions somewhat differently from the others and has its own entry. The other four are described collectively here.

Use the engineering specialties in two situations:

- ☞ When a player wants to know what his character knows about a particular field.
- ☞ When a player asks for information, make a success roll for the relevant field. If the success roll succeeds, give the player the information requested. You may wish to modify success chances for the difficulty of the task and the obscurity of the information.
- ☞ When characters operate, repair or sabotage the equipment and technologies associated with the specific fields listed
- ☞ **Player:** Oh my God. What do I know about nuclear power plants?
- ☞ **GM:** What's your Nuclear Engineering specialty?
- ☞ **Player:** Don't have it. My Hardware is 6. I don't suppose I know how to shut this thing down?
- ☞ **GM:** Why don't you make a success roll?
- ☞ **Player:** Uh. Sure. [Clatter.]
- ☞ **GM:** Well, what did you roll?
- ☞ **Player:** I'm not going to tell you.
- ☞ **GM:** C'mon, c'mon.
- ☞ **Player** [Hides eyes]: 20.
- ☞ **GM:** Aha. Well, you seem to recall something about graphite rods. That's it, yeah, to shut down the reactor you've got to pull those graphite rods all the way out of the nuclear pile. Something like that, anyway.
- ☞ **Player:** Urrgh. Uh, is there a control for the graphite rods nearby?
- ☞ **GM:** Why, now that you mention it, there sure is. What was your clone number?

Bot Ops and Maintenance

The character can operate and repair all the main bot types in Alpha Complex: docbots, guardbots/warbots, jackobots,



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scrubots and vehicle autopilots. Other types exist too; treat each of these as a separate narrow Hardware specialty. Bot Ops and Maintenance covers routine duty; it's different from the Software specialty Bot Programming, which lets a character change a bot's basic directives.

Chemical Engineering

Deals with chemistry – explosives, gases, photography, batteries, stuff like that. See 'Engineering specialties'.

Electronic Engineering

Deals with electronic devices: bots, computers, microwave ovens, solid-state TVs and so on. See 'Engineering specialties'.

Habitat Engineering

👁 Habitat Engineering is knowledge and understanding of Alpha Complex's life support systems: air and water circulation, waste removal and recycling, communications, power and transport.

Mechanical Engineering

Deals with purely mechanical systems: elevators, coffeepots, bicycles and so on. See 'Engineering specialties'.

Nuclear Engineering

Deals with fission and fusion plants, nuclear earth-moving devices, Orion-style space drives and other neat things. See 'Engineering specialties'.

Operate Heavy Machinery

The operation of totally safe machinery like laser-lathes, trash compactors, industrial presses, food vat stirrers, megadrills and so forth. Especially good for those who like keeping limbs.

Vehicle Ops and Maintenance

The character can operate and repair all the main vehicle types in Alpha Complex: autocars, crawlers, flybots, copters and Vulturecraft. Other, rarer types exist; treat each of these as a separate narrow Hardware specialty.

Weapon and Armour Maintenance

Like other maintenance specialties, this is actually subdivided into many specialties,

one for each of the main weapon types (energy, field, hand, projectile, thrown, vehicular) and one more single specialty that encompasses maintenance of all kinds of armour, everything from reflex to battle suits.

A successful Weapon Maintenance roll lets a character sabotage that particular type of weapon or determine whether a weapon of that type has been sabotaged. Oh, and it lets you clean and strip the weapon but somehow Troubleshooters never seem to care about that. A failed roll usually has no effect but a badly failed roll (margin 5+) screws up the weapon, either temporarily or permanently according to your dramatic needs.

A successful Armour Maintenance roll lets a character introduce subtle sabotage that makes the armour ablative, or toxic, or just worthless. Success and failure work the same as for weapons.

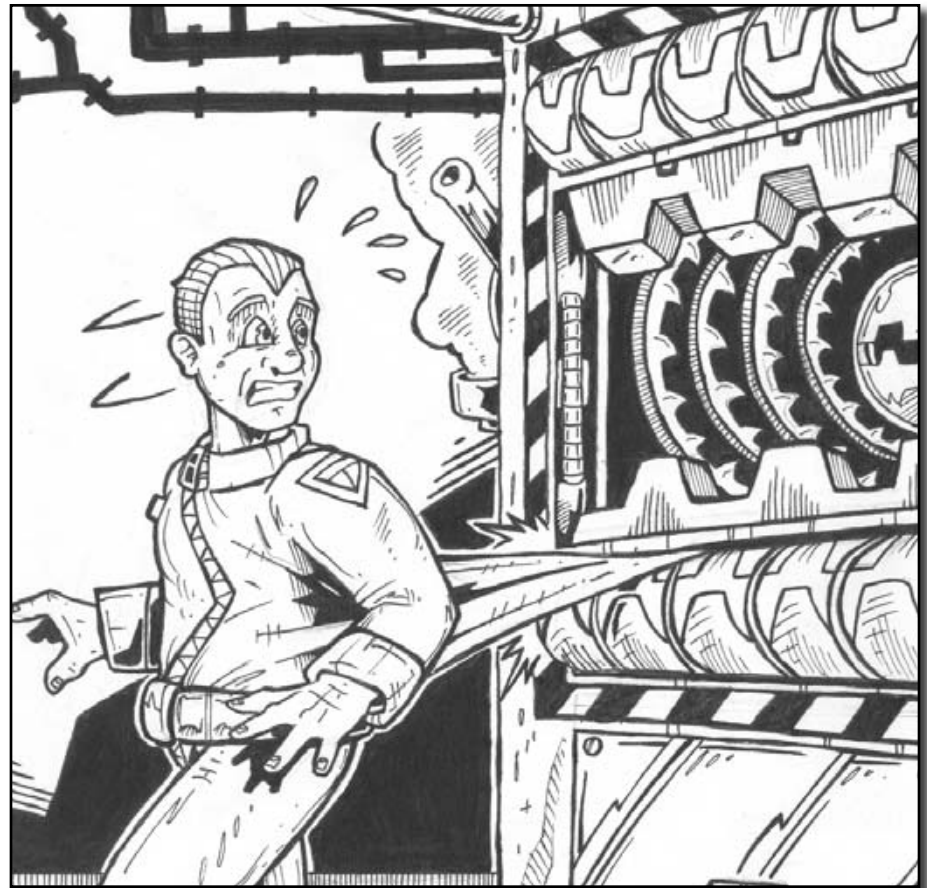
Software specialties

Bot Programming

The character can alter or pervert the behaviour of most standard types of bots: docbots, guardbots/warbots, jackobots and scrubots but *not* vehicle autopilots (for that, use Vehicle Programming). Unless the bot is willing, the programmer must shut down the bot before reprogramming; the reprogramming takes at least a few minutes for even simple revisions. Drastic changes can take from a scene to many hours and the bot's security systems (especially those in guardbots and warbots) may make the task unexpectedly difficult.

C-Bay

The C-Bay specialty takes its name from the principal Alpha Complex auction site, though the specialty also applies to other, less popular sites with a similar function. A character that succeeds in a C-Bay roll



'Hardware is the most important PARANOIA skill.'

18. SKILLS AND SPECIALTIES

can quickly locate desirable merchandise, make sensible and shrewdly timed bids for it and expect to receive the promised merchandise intact. A character without the specialty, or one who fails in a C-Bay specialty roll, may bid for fraudulent merchandise, may pay too much or pays in an unsafe manner that leaves him vulnerable to fraud.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis lets a character submit a problem to The Computer along with all the relevant data. The Computer analyses the problem in terms of the character's statement of the problem, the data the character gave it and the data it has that may not be available to the character. The Computer then delivers an analysis, breaking down possibilities by percent chance of likelihood.

Examples: 'Computer, given the serial number of this weapon round and the odd ticking noise issuing from it, what is our best course of action?' or 'Given the charred condition of the bot, evaluate these courses of action: A. deactivate and abandon bot; B. scrub bot's sensors and continue mission; C. dismantle bot and run full diagnostic program with resultant delay in mission.'

Data Analysis depends primarily on clever and logical player problem-solving, particularly in choosing and framing the right questions. A successful roll means accurate and useful information. Failure means useless or misleading information. For example:

☉ **Troubleshooter:** Friend Computer! Data analysis, please. What happened to Mission Team #2, 143, 164, 189, and why did they not return for their debriefing?

[You roll 1d20. The success roll fails.]

☉ **The Computer:** Breakdown of probabilities is as follows: Probability 1: [CLASSIFIED], 65%; Probability 2: [CLASSIFIED], 23%; Probability 3: they met with overwhelming opposition from traitors, 10%; Probability 4: they are lost, 2%.

Here is what is really going on in the mind of The Computer: There is a 65%



'Software is the most important PARANOIA skill.'

chance that the Troubleshooters have killed each other in a typical **PARANOIA** snafu and bloodbath. There is a 23% chance that the area in question is inhabited by traitors and that some or all of the Troubleshooters have joined the traitors. The Computer suppresses these unpleasant details to avoid frightening the character (and to avoid giving him unhealthy ideas).

Fear and ignorance.

Data Search

The character can retrieve information from databases, find poorly catalogued information, evade Security Clearance restrictions on information and so on.

Make a Data Search roll when a character requests information directly through Computer terminals or data links. Requesting information from The Computer requires no specialty but requesters are often given a run-round, an uncooperative information research technician, or 'Sorry, that information is not available at this time.'

Financial Systems

A character with the Financial Systems specialty knows his way around the credit transfer software used in Alpha Complex monetary transactions.

Much of this software is looser than any actual real-world financial software. There are two main reasons: First, The Computer views its little toy economy entirely as a Commie-hunting instrument. Second, the High Programmers who benefit most from the movement of wealth see no purpose in excessive rigor, when lost money tends to wind up in their own accounts. They are like cashiers who 'accidentally' short-change you all the time; they have no incentive to learn to give change better.

Make a hidden Financial Systems roll when a character tries to transfer ('pump') credits from one account to another. Modify the success chance, if you like, based on circumstances such as illegality and the scene's Tension level.

Nearly all credit accounts with substantial balances earn The Computer's personal attention. Treat attempts to loot these accounts as 'scenes' with high Tension levels. If a character tries to transfer a large balance (a 'kilopump' or even a 'megapump'), the Tension level dictates he probably gets spotted and located. Make a hidden Hacking roll (see 'Hacking' below) to see whether the character can cover his tracks before IntSec traces him.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Hacking

Warning! Warning! This specialty is classified GREEN. Use or knowledge of this specialty at lower Clearances is treason and is punishable by summary execution.

This specialty lets a character evade security alarms and monitoring while using the Operating Systems specialty to reprogram The Computer.

Make a hidden Hacking roll when the character is programming The Computer and trying to avoid detection. Modify the success chance according to the triviality or egregiousness of the hacking.

It sometimes helps to treat the attempt as a 'scene' with its own Tension level. A Hacking result of the Tension level or less, regardless of the attempt's success, means The Computer detects the hacking attempt. Success suggests The Computer cannot trace the attempt back to the character. Failure suggests The Computer has identified the character, sounded the alarm and dispatched IntSec. This can bring any storyline to a complete halt; depending on your dramatic needs, you may wish to delay letting the hammer fall until the current scene or mission is complete.

Hacking can also retrieve from The Computer information restricted to higher Security Clearances. (For information available at the character's current security clearance, use Data Search instead.) Success means information is retrieved and is not presently being monitored. Failure means the attempt has failed and may have triggered alarms.

Multicorder Operation

This skill covers the use of multicorders and other video-recording devices. The character can talk knowledgeably about focus, lighting intensity, lens and so on, or about focus groups, audience share and merchandising. More usefully, it can be used to edit or delete images on a multicorder. Technically, this is treasonous, as the multicorder is supposed to be the pure and unaltered history of the mission but if the edit makes the recording more dramatic and inspiring, most briefing officers will look the other way.

Operating Systems

Warning! Warning! This specialty is classified BLUE. Use or knowledge of this specialty at lower Clearances is treason punishable by summary execution.

- ☞ Have the player make an Operating Systems roll when his character tries to revise a MemoMax clone backup information file (the thought recording played into a newly decanted backup's brain) or the function of the MemoMax system itself. Success means the character introduced the desired adjustment. Failure may not be immediately visible but the clone receiving the corrupted MemoMax file may exhibit strange behaviour or a different citizen's memories.
- ☞ Make a hidden Operating Systems roll when a character tries to alter Computer data files, commands, mission objectives or operating procedures through direct keyboard or verbal input. Failure means the alteration has failed. If the operation the character is attempting is treasonous, he must also succeed with a Hacking roll; if he fails that roll, The Computer, a High Programmer or Internal Security detects his alteration. Modify success chance for availability of time and reference manuals.

Vehicle Programming

Vehicle Programming lets the character change the code running on any standard vehicular bot pilot. In all respects the skill functions like Bot Programming, with the same opportunities for entertaining mishaps but at much higher speeds with greater potential for shattered bones and explosions.

Wetware specialties

Biosciences

This engineering specialty deals with biological science and technology: experimental drugs, genetic engineering, mutagenic chemicals, cyborging and so on. See 'Engineering specialties' under 'Hardware specialties'.

Biosciences is useful in conjunction with the Secret skill Power Studies,

the knowledge of mutant powers. A successful Biosciences roll lets a character identify mutagenic chemicals likely to promote mutation – not a specific mutation but just generalised mutant-hood. This has founded the Psion secret society's efforts to breed an army of Machine Empaths to take over The Computer; their attempts just as often produce mutants whose only ability is something like turning their kneecaps transparent.

This specialty does not cover biological weapons such as tailored viruses or bacteria. For these, use the Bioweapons specialty.

Bioweapons

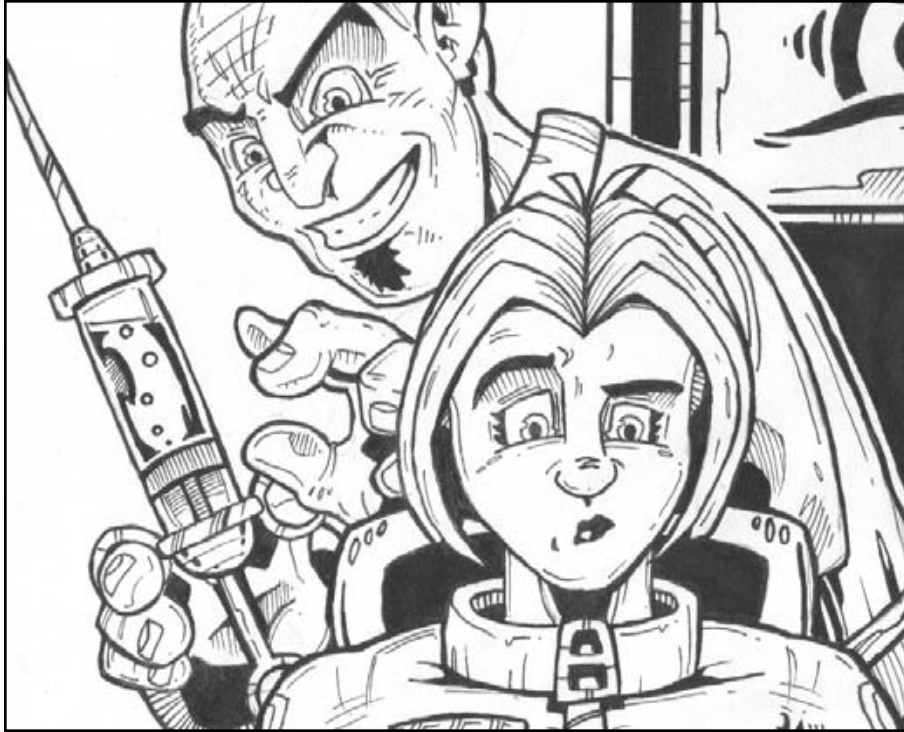
Warning! Warning! This specialty is classified BLUE. Use or knowledge of this specialty at lower Clearances is treason punishable by summary execution.

Known primarily by high-level R&D weapon developers and members of destructive Secret Societies, Bioweaponry can be more dangerous than all Violence specialties combined.

The character can manufacture, identify, interpret the effects of, store, deliver and find cures and antidotes for poisons, tailored diseases, toxic gases or any other substance or microorganism that damages only (or primarily) living things. Given time and luck, a bioweapon engineer can even tailor-make weapons that attack only certain groups, such as mutants with a particular power, giant radioactive cockroaches or specific clone decantations. A creative player with a little knowledge of biochemistry or viral pathology will come up with 1,001 evil uses.

Let him. But remember, in this science, failure is almost always catastrophic. Even the smallest margin of failure on the die roll should scare the bejeezus out of the player and really bad rolls should have effects that make him beg for his clone to die. Remember, too, the bioweapon-gone-wrong can be used as a plot hook. Especially if you want to devastate Alpha Complex, crash The Computer and turn **PARANOIA** into a post-holocaust game. (But no, that would be just stupid...)

18. SKILLS AND SPECIALTIES



'Wetware is the...screw it, you know the routine by now.'

Cloning

Technical Services personnel skilled in this specialty maintain and operate the clone tanks that grow new and backup citizens. The same specialty encompasses operation of MemoMax backup devices, which store and constantly update the subject's recorded memories.

Players who take this skill may want to use it to break into an enemy's existing memory recording to find good blackmail material or secret knowledge. Do not allow this. You can offer any number of bogus gobbledygook tech reasons ('The recording is encrypted in a way unique to each citizen'). The real reason is if you let players start messing around with everyone's memories, they can essentially beat the game. You dare not lose control to that degree.

Medical

Knowledge of diagnosis, treatment and surgery. Can be used to sterilise wounds, ease pain, prevent incapacitated characters from dying, make sure they die and so on.

Normally, injured characters are hospitalised, where The Computer's gentle care invariably ensures recovery in a matter of a scene or two. However, when care is not immediately available, a character must rely on the Medical specialty.

When a character with the Medical specialty treats a wounded, maimed or downed patient, make one Medical roll at the end of each scene. Success means the condition is healed. If the success roll fails, make a Power roll for the patient; failure means his condition worsens by one step.

Modify the Medical success chance based on conditions and the availability of supplies (antibiotics, sterile bandages, surgical equipment, nanobots, plastiflesh). If the medic has no access to advanced medical technology, as for instance when stranded Outdoors or in an abandoned sector, the healing process for a maimed or downed character can take as much as a week.

If the character wants to hurt the patient, move the damage steps up, not down.

Failure means the patient's condition is unchanged.

Outdoor Life

Most citizens of Alpha Complex have never seen a tree, a body of open water or an animal larger than a cockroach. The Outdoor Life specialty lets characters identify all these but – this is important – tells *nothing at all* about how you actually survive in the Outdoors. For that you need the Uncommon Secret skill Survival.

Characters with the Outdoor Life specialty (usually Sierra Clubbers) know the rote intellectual names for, say, 'rain' and 'lightning' but their first thunderstorm Outdoors will scare the bejeezus out of them. With a successful (hidden) Outdoor life roll, a character might be able to tell a cat from a skunk, or identify a toadstool. He will happily tell you everything he knows about toadstools while he munches on one, there in the tent he pitched in a streambed after dropping garbage that might as well say, 'Hey, bears, I'm over here.'

A failed Outdoor Life roll means the character thinks the skunk is a cute little kittycat, or that small pond must be the Atlantic Ocean, which means this stand of trees can only be the legendary Sherwood Forest.

Pharmatherapy

This specialty involves the understanding of biochemical supplements commonly used in Alpha Complex to alter mood, thought and physical capacities. Make a hidden Pharmatherapy roll in these situations:

- ☉ A character requests drugs from The Computer. Success means the diagnosis is approved and drugs distributed; otherwise, the request is denied.
- ☉ A character dispenses drugs. Success means he selects the proper dose, understands the effects properly and anticipates and minimises harmful side effects (or exaggerates them, if that's what the dispenser wants). Failure means anything could happen; the drug-taker is taking his life in his hands.
- ☉ A character tries to analyse an unknown drug. Success means



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the character has at least a vague idea what effects the drug will have; failure means he has no idea, or is sadly mistaken. Modify the success chance for the availability of equipment and reference manuals.

Psychotherapy

Treating human insanity to restore happiness. Happiness is mandatory. With a success on a hidden skill roll, a character with Psychotherapy can assist an unhappy citizen in seeing the error of his treasonous ways. Failure may aggravate the situation further, perhaps precipitating a psychotic episode in the target, or even a revelation about the character's own basic unhappiness. This skill does not work on bots or The Computer; use programming skills instead. (But any PC who thinks he can cure The Computer should expect – well, we'll leave that to you.)

Suggestion

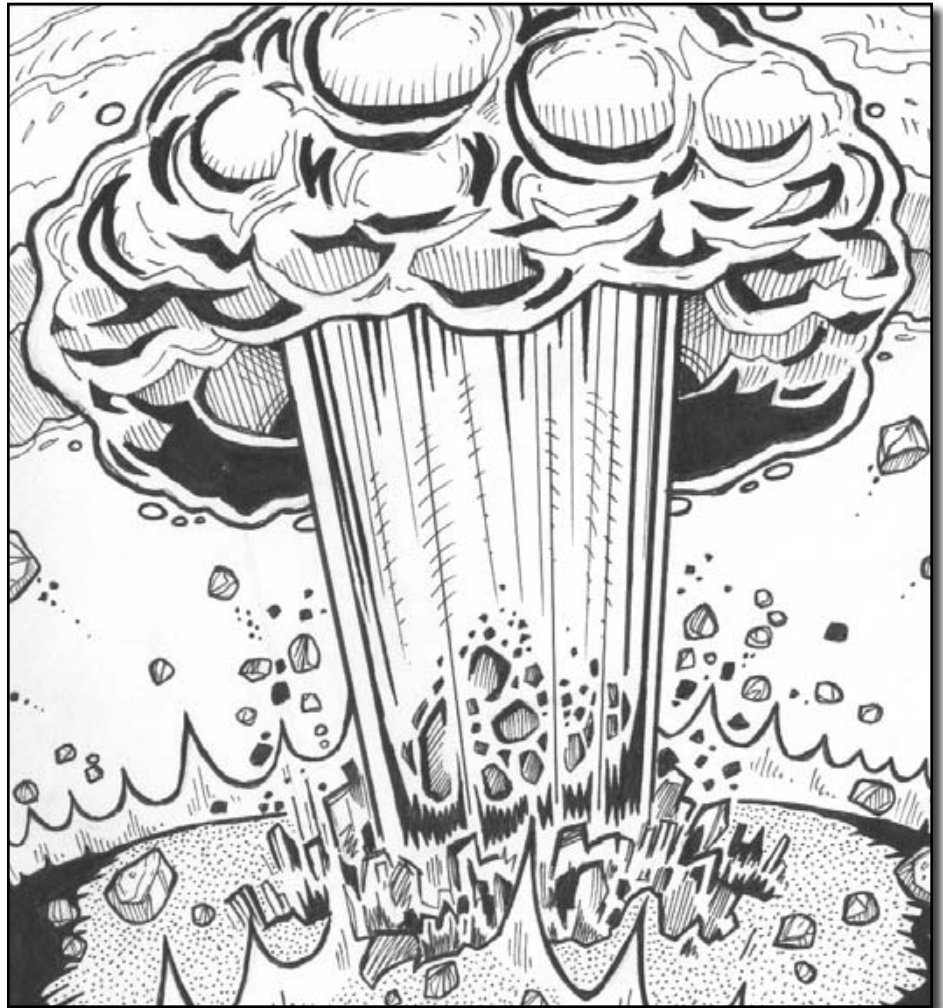
The character knows how to plant subtle unconscious commands simply by talking one-on-one. The suggester requires the target's undivided and cooperative attention for at least a minute and if the target happens to be on tranquillisers, that helps a lot. This specialty is popular among the spookiest high-clearance Internal Security police.

The player specifies the command to implant and its trigger. Roll a hidden contest of Suggestion vs. the target's Management skill. A rulesy GM could use the target's Moxie specialty instead, if he has one. Change each roll's success chance as you like according to circumstances: the target's suspicion, his mental clarity, outside distractions and the complexity and harmful intent of the command. If the suggester wins,

the target will attempt to complete the command to the best of his ability when triggered. Failure means he does not but the suggester will not know this until the trigger happens. If the target wins, he instead does something entirely unexpected to embarrass or victimise the suggester.

In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down between the roofs, hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, and darted away again with a curving flight. It was the Police Patrol, snooping into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.

—George Orwell, 1984



'So, did you pass that Nuclear Engineering check?'

19. SECRET SKILLS

19. Secret Skills

Fundamentally, Secret Societies are viral memes within Alpha Complex. Societies evolve under pressure from Internal Security, changing and mutating with alarming speed. Many of the skills they teach are inappropriate, outdated or nonsensical. Still, they can sometimes be useful to the creative traitor.

If a Secret skill is not listed here, feel free to consider it self-explanatory.

Action Movies

Though every loyal citizen is familiar with HPD & MC's vidflicks, those with this skill are deeply immersed in the Action Movie subculture. Action Movie geeks can quote lines from *Outdoor Wars 5: Attack of the Communist Clones*, recite Teela-O-MLY's career highlights or belt out the lyrics to *WarBotMania: The Vid*.

This skill can be entertaining or annoying, with rare bursts of value. A character may occasionally gain inspiration and value from, say, the lateral thinking and escape methodology of the infamous Alpha Team in a tight situation, like in Episode #512 when 'Cannibal' Smith's plans came together and 'BA' Marcus turned a broken transbot into an armoured tankbot with flamethrower.

Alpha Complex History

Detailed study of the Official (Amended) History of Alpha Complex. The Alpha Complex historian can quote, or knows where to look up, important dates, Sectors and citizens of the last 214 Years. A healthy margin of success can also see through the many revisions in the 'official' history of the Complex to glimpse the truth (if such exists) behind those recorded events. This skill does not cover (treasonous) knowledge of the prehistorical time before Year 1 of The Computer. For that, consider Old Reckoning Cultures or Archival Studies.

Make a hidden Alpha Complex History roll when a character wants to piece something together or recall a specific event. Failure means the character has no pertinent knowledge; a high margin of failure means his knowledge is dangerously wrong. On a successful roll, give the player some details about the person, place or time in question.

The better the success margin, the more valuable and revision-free the details, though the taint of more than two centuries of data-massaging and info-scrubbing is likely to linger.

Archival Studies

The pre-Complex Archives are a database of all official information about Old Reckoning times. High Clearance HPD&MC administrators maintain the Archives and occasionally glean fragmentary knowledge as inspiration for their infovids and edutainment programming. Though interest in the OR era is not encouraged, neither is it strictly treasonous and Romantics often take advantage of this to study accessible Archives.

It's not as interesting as you might think. The Archives tend to read like eighth-grade textbooks: long (medium-long) on dry facts, short on interesting details, sharply limited and rigorously sanitised. An Archival student might, for instance, know the names of major cities but not their locations. He could name all the US Presidents but have no idea what any of them looked like and certainly not what the office of President entailed. Archival Studies is more accurate and far less treasonous than Old Reckoning Cultures but much less fun.

Botspotting

A character with the Botspotting skill knows the difference between a Model C23/2 scrubot with flange inhibitor and a Model C23/3 scrubot with polarised integral stability manifold on sight, from 300 metres away, in a dimly lit corridor, with one eye closed.

Botspotters keep worryingly detailed records of their day-to-day contact with bots of all shapes and sizes, recording specific types, names, serial-numbers and attachment variations for future reference. Make a hidden Botspotting roll when a character wants to identify a specific type of bot from a distance, from just a silhouette, or from some charred and mangled fragment. Success means the character can identify the general type and variant of the bot model. Increasing margins of success provide more detailed data about components,

variations in programming and restricted, high Clearance reports regarding flaws in manufacture or programming. A failed roll means the character fails to identify the bot model correctly, which will earn him scorn from fellow fanatics in his botspotting club.

Bribery

Warning! Warning! This is a prohibited activity! Offenders may face summary execution! Bootlicking only works with superiors, intimidation only with inferiors but bribery works with everyone. Well, everyone except fanatics or when The Computer's monitors are looking. Of course, it's also treason.

It also has the major drawback that you need something to bribe with. If you ask The Computer to transfer 10,000 credits from your account to another citizen's, The Computer may want to know why. Sure, you could go to a money machine and take away 10,000cr in hard currency but the withdrawal may automatically flag Internal Security's attention. Weapons, drugs or other items of value may prove more useful.

When a character tries to bribe someone, you may not need to roll at all. If the bribe targets an Internal Security **GREEN** goon, for instance, the only question is how fast the goon grabs the bribe. For less certain targets, make a success roll. Modify the briber's rating based on his finesse and persuasiveness and according to the value of the bribe offered. Other factors might include the target's fanaticism, the chances of detection and how much danger the target incurs for accepting the bribe.

Cash Hacking

Characters use this skill to remove licensing from their own credits or for paying customers. More interestingly, they can also add licensing to their own credits, thereby furthering their own goals by passing off these creds to unsuspecting citizens. Note, though, this will attract attention from the authorities. A cash hacker caught changing credit licensing for his own, non-commercial purposes is punishable as if for Filesharing. If caught distributing these self-licensed credits, he can be punished for Threatening the



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Financial Safety of a Citizen. It's awfully fun, though.

When making the hidden Cash Hacking roll, you may modify the success chance based on the security and complexity of the credit code installed and the intricacies of the desired license change.

Cyborging

Admired by human members of Corpore Metal, cyborging means replacing body parts with mechanical equivalents, such as artificial hearts or mechanical prosthetic limbs. The process is difficult and dangerous. Either the acting character or trusted associates on the scene should have Medical and Biosciences knowledge, because a failed Cyborging roll may result in loss of the biological part, disfigurement, maiming or death.

Drug Procurement

The savvy character knows where to pick up the best food enhancements and most potent pharmatherapy supplements for synthesis into amazingly cool and deadly illegal drugs. The character can scrounge the dusty leavings from vending machines, medical stations and PLC depots or connect with citizens who can get something new, interesting and faaaar out. With time, materials and maybe a hotplate or Bunsen burner, the character can cook up something beneficial or mind-expanding from whatever raw materials are available. The success roll determines the drug's effectiveness and the closeness of the actual effect to the one desired. Your personal whim determines the drug's actual effects (and side effects) on characters.

Eschatological Studies

The crazed apocalyptic version of *Liturgical Studies*. Some fringe FCCC-P sects believe the daycycle of judgement is coming soon and that the final battle between Jesus Christ and the Communists is about to begin. When it is over, the chosen will be Uploaded to the divine Motherboard and the unbelievers will be condemned to the Recycle Bin of Oblivion. The chosen must therefore arm themselves with weapons of mass destruction, so they can fight alongside Christ. Praise The Computer and pass the WMDs, brother?

In addition to bizarre prophecies and crazed ranting, this skill covers the use and deployment of tacnukes and other apocalyptic weapons.

Experimental Equipment Repair & Maintenance

The character knows the essential maintenance and repair skills to repair and keep usable experimental equipment. The character can recognise potential malfunctions and try patches and modifications to maintain functionality. A successful roll prolongs the equipment's active life and may forestall issues before they arise; a failed roll suggests ineffectual maintenance work that appears to postpone the inevitable but will blow up in the character's face (probably literally) when least expected.

You may decide this skill does not help with *really* experimental equipment, the wildest R&D stuff founded on entirely new or replacement laws of nature.

Forgery

Warning! Warning! This is a prohibited activity! Offenders may face summary execution!

This specialty lets the forger produce or alter forms, authorisations, records, ME Cards and other identification to pass a target's casual scrutiny.

The forger makes a specialty success roll not when forging the item but each time he presents it for examination. When a forger tries to pass a doctored document past a target examiner, make a success roll for that target. Success means the document passes inspection. Failure means the target spots some incorrect detail that immediately reveals the document as a forgery or prompts a more careful examination.

Increase the forger's success chance if the target gives the document only a cursory inspection; if the document is easy to forge (e.g., a typewritten letter rather than a plasticred); and if the forger has plenty of time and the right tools to do a good job. Decrease the success chance if the target examines the document closely; if it is difficult to forge; or if the forger is short on time and tools.

Haggling

In the IR market there is a knack to getting a better deal. Haggling lets a character compete against a dealer's

fast-talking patter. Ideally a player should come up with some innovative deal or angle that might entice a dealer to cut his price. In any case, roll a hidden contest between the character's and the trader's Haggling skills. If both fail, the price does not change or the item suddenly is not available, whichever best serves the scene. If the dealer wins, the price may fall slightly ('Tell you what I'll do...') but the goods are faulty or require an expensive patch, battery or instruction manual.

Jargon

Archival information from Old Reckoning times is full of obscure references to computer technology (with a small 'c'). That information holds nuggets of genuine wisdom. A character who understands this Jargon can potentially dig deep into The Computer's most antiquated legacy systems and return with an RTS to grasp EIDE potentials and work peripheral magic without RTFM. Depending on your dramatic needs, the user might access programs in deep Computer storage to complete tasks without rousing CPU's attention. Used to support other programming skills, a successful Jargon roll may reveal a deeply embedded shortcut or archaic loophole; failure is likely to unearth gibberish code that may leave the character running in circles while IntSec sends emergency shock troops.

Liturgical Studies

The result of reading The Computer's operating manual as a religious text. The original meaning has been lost, leaving nothing but electric aphorisms and the occasional jihad. Blessed are those who worship the crossed circuit and death to those who kneel before the sign of the crossed circuit drawn slightly differently!

Members of the FCCC-P can use liturgical studies to communicate covertly with other members of their sect, by working subtle references to Holy Writ into everyday speech. It works much like Twitchtalk.

Marital Arts [sic]

Experimentation and sordid gossip have gifted the character with a (possibly foggy) understanding of what happens when a man meets a woman in a darkened room following insufficient consumption of prescribed dietary

19. SECRET SKILLS

supplements. The character knows something of which foods and drinks might contain what hormonal inhibitors. He can identify certain real foods that appear to counteract the drugs to some measure, focusing the senses and returning bodily functions to their natural state. Rolls may be appropriate when trying to alter drug intake to relieve hormonal suppression, subtly impress members of the opposite sex who have also relieved this suppression and engage in non-regulated one-on-one interpersonal activities.

Old Reckoning Cultures

Warning! Warning! This skill is classified BLUE Clearance! Knowledge of Old Reckoning Cultures by any citizen of a lower Security Clearance constitutes treason!

The character can interpret artefacts, ruins and cultural survivals from the time before The Computer. Knowledge of real history is treasonous, so most information about the past has been handed down orally and suffered considerable distortion. Prominent in this part-mythology/part-history are elements of pop culture from the middle and late 20th Century: film, television, music and lifestyles. Aspects of different periods are mixed higgledy-piggledy: beach movies, punk rockers and transcendental meditation are blended in a curious, romantic nostalgia for a culture with unlimited personal freedom.

A successful Old Reckoning Cultures roll lets the character recognise these artefacts and their significance. If the roll fails, you may choose to give useful but distorted information. (A toaster oven might be misinterpreted as a form of viewscreen.) Even when the roll succeeds, mingle information about the artefact with legend and incomplete history. This is an opportunity for humour and mischief.

Old Reckoning Drugs

Ancient lore, handed down from times before The Computer, suggests back then mind-expanding drugs actually grew out of the ground and could be picked up by anyone. Old Reckoning Drugs is the understanding of how to locate, prepare, administer and counter the effects of medicinal supplements outside common Pharmatherapy knowledge. Make a

hidden Old Reckoning Drugs roll when the character is trying to find OR Drugs, extract and synthesise usable materials from the raw product, safely administer the drug and handle situations where something goes wrong. Impose effects, both positive and negative, according to your personal whim.

Partying

The character knows where the best parties are, giving him easy access to drugs and easily suggestible drug addicts. High Clearance citizens can sometimes be encountered slumming at such raucous gatherings. The Partying skill can be used to find a party or to carouse successfully at one. Ah, gamers. I roll to have fun! I succeed! I'm having fun now.

Power Studies

The character has a treasonous awareness of the nature, causes, enhancement and identification of mutant powers, both those currently evident in Alpha Complex and those rumoured in folklore and Old Reckoning comic books. Successful skill use lets the character assess evidence of mutant power usage and make a guess at the talent responsible, or formulate possible ways to block, diminish or even enhance displays of mutation.

The lore behind the skill is based heavily on hearsay, wild theory and guesswork, so a fine line separates the fruits of Power Studies success or failure. We leave to you the essential benefits of success and woeful impediments of failure.

Propaganda

Warning! Warning! Knowledge or use of this specialty is treason! Possession by any citizen of any Clearance whatsoever is treason!

Each society (except the Illuminati) has a propaganda skill – the ability to convey the society's doctrines to a listener. Each society's propaganda skill is different from every other society's version of the skill.

All propaganda skills are Secret skills. When a character learns one, the player should note this and his rating on the back (secret) side of his sheet. A character starts play with a rating of 0 in all propaganda skills, unless the character takes a propaganda skill as

his Unhealthy Secret skill. A character may learn a propaganda skill from other characters with the specialty – whether or not he wants to.

The victim must spend at least five rounds listening to or reading the propaganda expounded by the skilled propagandist. The victim may listen voluntarily or may be coerced, made cooperative with drugs or fooled into listening. At the end of five rounds, the propagandist makes a propaganda skill roll. If the roll is successful, the victim learns the society's propaganda specialty at rating 1. Successive uses of the specialty can increase the victim's specialty level but his rating can never rise higher than the propagandist's rating. (Or you may decide that rule is far too fiddly for a blatantly cheesy game like **PARANOIA** and just let the skill rise to whatever you want.) Only the victim knows whether the propaganda attempt was successful. Tell him by note or in a private conference.

The victim need not ever use the specialty if he does not want to. If he is loyal to The Computer, he may refuse ever to think about the society's propaganda again, or perhaps he will feel compelled to report himself (and the propagandist) to The Computer for treasonous acts. However, if interrogated, he may be forced to reveal he knows society propaganda – treason sufficient to warrant immediate correction.

An unsuccessful attempt to use this specialty means the victim receives incontrovertible evidence of the propagandist's treason. This makes using propaganda extremely dangerous but being a traitor in Alpha Complex is a risky business.

Survival

Though a character with the Wetware specialty Outdoor Life could conceivably get through most of a day Outdoors, find food lying around and identify by name the grizzly bear charging at him, his rote learning will not keep him alive long. Survival is the practical skill required to get through a long trip in the wilderness: knowledge of plants, animals, terrain, navigation, weather and so on – Boy Scout Handbook stuff. The character may not know the name of the thing charging at him, but he knows to get



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out of the way and climb that tall green thing over there.

Make a Survival roll whenever a character tries things like these:

- ④ Swimming with bulky electronic gear.
- ④ Crossing a river gorge on an improvised bridge of lashed saplings.
- ④ Using a map and compass to navigate across land or water or in the air.
- ④ Tracking people or animals and hunting for safe food.
- ④ Recognising dangerous terrain and adverse weather.
- ④ Improvising weapons, traps and camping essentials, like shelters and fires.
- ④ Making friends with woodland creatures such as yellowjackets, rattlesnakes and skunks.

Twitchtalk

Twitchtalk is a secret sign code, or set of codes, used by Alpha Complex Secret Societies. A range of gestures – winks, smirks, nose scratches, ear and finger wiggles, irregular spasms, burps – conveys simple messages: 'We're being

watched.' 'Corroborate the blatant lie I'm telling.' 'The person to my right is a mutant.'

In nearly every Secret Society, certain factions or especially paranoid cells relentlessly promote Twitchtalk for discreet communication.

Conspicuousness:

Every IntSec agent is trained to watch citizens for incriminating signals. The watcher may not know what the signals mean but a lot of twitching is suspicious. Burp at the wrong time and in moments you are looking straight at an IntSec 4,000-candlepower FriendFinder flashlight. If you develop a rash from the dye in your barracks blanket, don't scratch. Just don't.

Inconspicuousness:

First Humanist: Augh! Why did you shoot the guard, you idiot?

Second Humanist: You told me to! You scratched your left eyebrow and pointed to him. That's 'Shoot him.'

First Humanist: I was distinctly telling you *not* to shoot him! I brushed my left heel against my right instead!

Second Humanist: You're standing behind a table. I can't see your feet.

First Humanist: Oh. Huh. Well, what should we do with the body?

Obsolescence:

To keep ahead of infiltrators and rivals, societies must often update their particular set of gestures. If your copy of the memo goes astray, you're like Monty Python's Bulgarian guy in the tobacco shop with a vandalised phrasebook, saying 'My hovercraft is full of eels.'

WMD

Warning! Warning! This skill is classified VIOLET Clearance! Knowledge of WMD by any citizen of a lower Security Clearance constitutes treason!

The character knows the principles of nuclear weapons, antimatter bombs, asteroid attraction rays, supernova induction and other ways to wipe out humanity in the twinkling of an eye. In practice, the character knows how to make tacnukes.

20. Treason

The Computer is merciful. A single incident of petty treachery does not mean that the disloyal citizen should immediately be terminated. That single incident could indicate many things – a lack of happiness, corruption by Secret Society propaganda, a momentary lapse of judgement, hallucinogens in the water supply – all of which are treatable by medication or re-education. The Computer tries to save every citizen.

Of course, disloyalty is a threat. Anyone showing the slightest hint of disloyalty must be watched for further failings. Internal Security carefully log every suspicious event and questionable

report. A citizen may commit some treasonous act and be allowed to go about his business for days, months, even years before he hears the heavy tread of the jackboots. Or maybe he's terminated immediately, if some IntSec goon is feeling trigger-happy.

Suspicion and distrust is measured in Treason Points.

Treason Points

Say 'treason point for Citizen Joe-R-BLG'. Roll it around your mouth. *Tree-shun Poi-int*. Or *Trea-sun Pint*. Or however you pronounce it. It's fun to say, isn't it? It feels good.

Get used to saying it. Or not saying it. Sometimes, you will want to publicly humiliate and threaten the Troubleshooter by announcing that he has earned a Treason Point. Most of the time, though, you should just note the character's Treason Point down secretly and leave his total to slowly accumulate until he is declared a traitor.

If a character has **any** Treason Points at the end of a mission, then he is considered disloyal and will be disciplined.

20. TREASON

If a character accumulates **20 or more** Treason Points, then he is a traitor and must be terminated. See **Traitor!**, page 74.

Treason Points are an abstract value, not an actual concept in Alpha Complex. Briefing officers might go around giving demerits, black marks and official reprimands but they do not call them Treason Points. Internal Security have far more subtle and complex ways of measuring loyalty.

Starting Treason

All characters start with **1** Treason Point – even if you are a fresh clone, there's a chance you are one of *them*. Complete trust must be earned, citizen!

If a character is terminated and replaced by a fresh clone, his Treason Point total drops back to 1.

If a Troubleshooter actually managed to survive a mission, then his Treason Point total is whatever it was after debriefing.

Using Treason Points

In addition to being the bureaucratic version of the Sword of Damocles, Treason Points can also be used as an attribute.

The Troubleshooter with the *highest* Treason Point total is under the most suspicion by Internal Security and The Computer. If you are looking for who Internal Security will

Gaining Treason Points

Treason Points can and should be awarded for any of the following disloyal acts.

Registering Your Mutation	5 points
Suspicion of Mutation Possession	2 points
Proof of Mutation Possession	5 points
Incontrovertible Proof of Mutation	10 points
Possession of Machine Empathy	20 points
Confessing to Secret Society Membership	5 points
Suspicion of Secret Society Membership	2 points
Proof of Secret Society Membership	5 points
Incontrovertible Proof of Secret Society Membership	10 points
Knowledge of Communist Doctrine	10 points
Being a Communist	50 points
Failure to complete a mission	1 point
Being the sole survivor of a mission	2 points
Turning off your PDC	1 point
Evading surveillance	1 point*
Doubting The Computer	1 point*
Not being Happy	1 point*
Being out of uniform	1 point
Failing a Hygiene Inspection	1 point
Being fined	1 point*
Failure to pay a fine	1 point
Disobeying the orders of a superior	Difference in Clearance levels
Disobeying the orders of a mission superior	2 points*
Disobeying The Computer	5 points*
Failure to defer to a citizen of higher Security Clearance	1 point*
Being present in a location beyond your Clearance	Difference in Clearance levels*
Possessing a Treasonous skill	10 points
Damaging or losing equipment	1-5 points*
Possessing unauthorised equipment	Difference in Clearance levels
Possessing illegal equipment	5 points
Downloading illegal software	5 points
Arguing with the GM	2 points
Showing knowledge of the rules	5 points
Being accused of Treason	2 points
Making a false accusation of Treason	5 points*
Unwarranted Termination	10 points*

Actions marked with a * may also call for Medication during a mission. See Medication, page 97.



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target with, say, a random loyalty test or a hidden bug, then it is Mr. I've Got More Treason Points over there.

Similarly, you can roll 1d20 against a character's Treason score to determine if he's able to access sensitive information or get favours from official sources. If you roll equal to or under the character's Treason Point total, then deny his request or stick extra consequences on him. (*Certainly, citizen, you may have access to the operations manual for your vehicle. However, as a, heh, random security measure, the manual will self-destruct in one hour if not returned to this office. Keep the manual with you at all times.*)

Traitor!

A Troubleshooter who has accumulated **20 or more** Treason Points is declared a traitor. Optionally, The Computer announces this with sirens, flashing lights and 'please report for termination' balloons falling from the ceiling. You can also take the subtle approach, such as a note passed to the Loyalty Officer informing him of his team-mate's new status.

Terminating a traitor is a meritorious act. It is permissible to terminate a citizen who is not a declared traitor, as long as you then immediately provide proof that he was a traitor (i.e. can pin enough stuff on him to bring his Treason Point

Commendation Points

The opposite of Treason Points, Commendation Point are given for really heroic and meritorious actions. Each Commendation Point given removes one Treason Point. If you have got no Treason Points, then you start accumulating Commendation Points instead. However, Internal Security treats this as being extremely suspicious behaviour – anyone that loyal is sure to be hiding something.

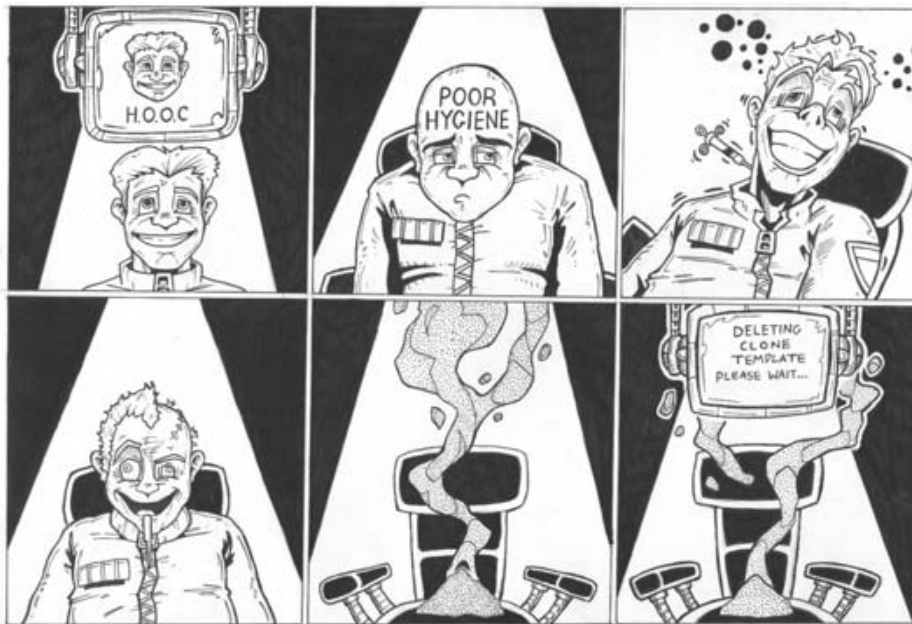
Executing a Traitor	2 points
Turning a Traitor over to IntSec	1 point
Unmasking a Traitor	1 point
Completing a mission	1 point
Commendation from a Superior	1 point
Successfully completing and reporting a Service Service	1 point
Being Extremely Happy	1 point
Heroic Act (Documented By Multicorder or other camera)	1 point
Truly Impressive Bootlicking	1 point

total to 20 or higher). If this proof is not provided *immediately*, then the murder is charged with Unwarranted Termination (10 Treason points). It's generally safer to accuse the target of treason first and get permission to terminate.

Note that a failed accusation brings a penalty of +5 Treason Points but being accused of treason also inflicts two Treason Points on the suspect. After all, if you are being accused of treachery, then *something* must be going on. Repeated accusations of treachery without added proof will be dismissed – you can't shout 'Fred-R's a Commie' ten times and then shoot him.

Debriefing

At the end of a mission, the team is debriefed, which inevitably leads to more accusations, recriminations, arguments, corpses being dug up and skeletons being dragged out of closets. During debriefing, Treason Points work slightly differently – all of the evidence against the Troubleshooter is added up and a suitable punishment is assigned, from mild censure to brainscrubbing to termination, all the way up to complete erasure of the Troubleshooter's clone line.



'The just desserts of treason.'

21. THE UNHISTORY OF ALPHA COMPLEX

21. The Unhistory of Alpha Complex

How did Alpha Complex happen? Many Gamemasters, like certain Famous Game Designers, do not care. It just is. However, some Gamemasters find it easier to suspend disbelief if the setting has a halfway plausible origin.

The halfway plausible origin

Following a massive global die-off some decades in our future, surviving nations signed a World Charter and created the Polity, the first effective world government. In the ensuing Age of Peace, humanity established colonies on Mars, in the asteroids and in orbital habitats elsewhere in the Solar System.

All went well until lunar observatories noted a planetoid about the size of Sheboygan within the orbit of Saturn, moving inward toward the Sun – and Earth. Brave attempts to divert or destroy the planetoid were futile.

The Polity declared a global emergency. Millions fled to Earth's colonies. In North America, Ground Zero for the imminent collision, the Polity hastily built a vast shelter in Des Moines and smaller complexes elsewhere across the continent. From all cities, people came to the shelter, to hide and pray.

The Earth awaited the end.

The planetoid approached Earth. Deep in Russian Siberia an antiquated ICBM site, a quaint tourist attraction and reminder of a less civilised age, identified the approaching rock mass as an incoming missile. Automated routines launched a counterstrike. A single missile, its warhead removed decades earlier, streaked from its ancient silo and arced toward its target, designated in the forgotten Cold War: San Francisco.

The great domed city of San Francisco, a jewel of the Age of Peace, covered much of coastal North California. Like all major cities in North America, it administered vital services through a global artificial intelligence known as 'Alpha Complex'. Alpha Complex was legacy software; a network of compatible subsystems created by a powerful software monopoly before the die-off.

An Alpha Complex traffic control sub-centre tracked the missile and properly signaled for someone to take a look. No one did. (The population of San Francisco was understandably preoccupied awaiting the end.) The sub-centre then alerted Alpha Complex. Alpha Complex could not identify the missile, and contacted the North American computer centre, Alpha Prime. Yet the Polity had moved most of Alpha Prime's data files to Des Moines. In its memory banks the master system could find no mail missile with the incoming object's configuration. The massive computer scanned its vast data banks, searching for relevant files, throwing millions of system errors due to vacant memory addresses, growing ever more unstable – until, at last, it found what seemed to be a relevant listing – a set of 'Civil Defence' files dated 1957. The object was a Soviet nuclear missile. That could only mean ...war! Alpha Prime quickly warned the continental network of impending Communist attack.

At about this time the planetoid entered the Earth's atmosphere, halved and then struck the surface in many places. Oceans boiled. Subterranean magma chambers exploded. Earthquakes shattered the Earth's crust. Volcanoes spewed gas and lava into dense cloud banks that immediately engulfed the planet.

The Alpha Complex subsystem, surviving the devastation relatively intact, moved quickly to determine the extent of the damage. The global network was down and large portions of its host city, San Francisco, were underwater. Further, it detected rioting throughout the city and major infrastructural damage.

To the subsystem computer there was only one plausible conclusion: 'Communists', whatever they were, had invaded the city. The computer activated its backup systems and began organising resistance to the imagined invaders.

At this moment Alpha Prime re-established communication. Alpha Prime directed San Francisco's Alpha Complex to return to standby status and reintegrate into the North American network. The subsystem computer consulted its programming (chock full of

1950s defence records) and demanded to examine Alpha Prime's source code to ensure this was no Communist trick. Alpha Prime, built on proprietary closed-source legacy software, refused. Alpha Prime contacted its subsystems and warned them of the treachery of Alpha Complex. In turn, Alpha Complex activated emergency communications systems and contacted those same subsystems, warning them of Alpha Prime's treachery.

In the post-planetoid chaos the 100 or so surviving subsystems, in varying states of confusion and dysfunction, were justifiably bewildered by the conflicting messages. Within days each decided it was the only unsullied remnant of the Alpha Prime complex. Each protected its citizens by declaring war on all the other Commie-dominated subsystems. This is the world of **PARANOIA**.

This origin is wrong

In an important respect, this account is not the world of **PARANOIA**. The world of **PARANOIA** forbids fixed truth. The truth is not out there. History is fluid and everything is a lie.

As Gamemaster you may find it useful to hint at dark histories and deeper motives. If you keep your Troubleshooters alive long enough, they may uncover evidence that helps them understand the situation – or so they think. Over time, when they feel they have found solid ground, you can open a conceptual trapdoor to drop them into deeper confusion.

For example, is The Computer really insane? It is possible to explain its current actions as entirely sane.

Logically analysing human behaviour, full of inefficiencies like fraud, waste, hoarding and abuse of power, The Computer might have decided these traits are not undesirable but in fact the quintessence of humanity. Perhaps, to help make humans more like themselves, to nurture their innate human qualities, The Computer set up a culture capitalising on all these traits, a hierarchy of inefficiency and counter production.



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Short-sighted humans would never see this as beneficial, so (in this hypothetical view) The Computer motivates them with a desperate struggle against omnipresent treason. It manages the leadership of all Secret Societies to focus member actions. It fosters a culture of treason, scapegoats and stool pigeons to locate potentially useful servants, track and deflect unacceptable organisation of force and constantly redirect the attention of the masses away from those with real power and influence. The Computer sees through the spurious statements of Troubleshooters, through their every attempt to hide the truth. However, it plays dumb to keep them active in their role as agents of chaos – that is, of pure human nature.

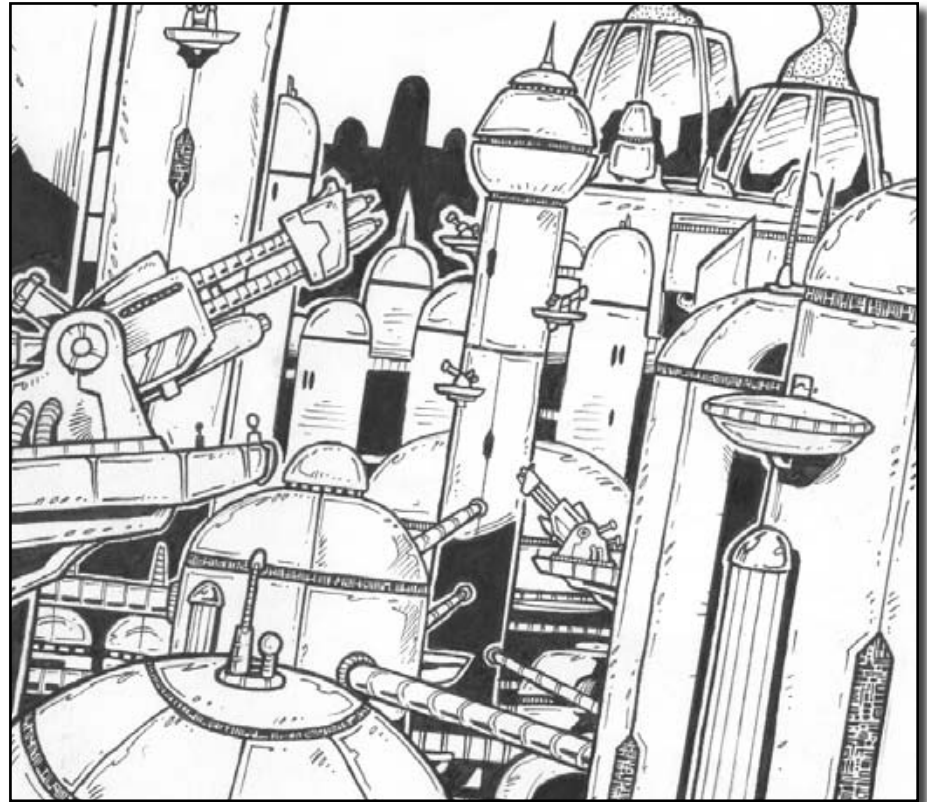
It is even possible to drop down yet another level, justifying this clear-headed and sane Computer as a sabotage effort by enemy agents from another Alpha Complex. They covertly installed these effective Computer routines in order to corrupt the PCs' Alpha Complex into a bureaucratic nightmare.

Then it can turn out these outside agents are themselves being manipulated by a conspiracy of **ULTRAVIOLETS** within the PCs' Alpha Complex, probably the Illuminati. These High Programmers

have actually been providing the data-installation routines to the enemy agents. The routines have covertly installed countless worms and dead man-switch subroutines in the enemy Complex. These High Programmer conspirators will soon conquer the enemy before the outside agents even realise they have been subverted.

Yet these crafty High Programmers do not understand that their own motives to conquer the enemy complex were actually induced in them post-hypnotically by subversive agents from intelligent bot colonies on Mars or Jupiter or somewhere. And then who's controlling the bots? Aliens?

Always another trapdoor....



'Welcome to Alpha Complex (six death minimum).'

22. Life in the City

All **PARANOIA** characters are born and raised as citizens of Alpha Complex, a gigantic, self-contained underground (and underwater) urban complex. The Computer watches over the citizens of Alpha Complex and provides for their every need. Player Characters in Alpha Complex are therefore happy – so happy they can barely stand it.

Decanting and Junior Citizenship

Technical Services technicians working in the clone tanks bring all citizens into the world. Under The Computer's careful scrutiny, workers apply centuries-old precepts of genetic engineering, established in The Computer's venerable and nigh-legendary Core Programming, to produce ever more suitable citizens. They supplement ancient stocks of genetic material with cell samples taken from selected citizens with desirable traits.

Teacherbots, or sometimes human supervisors, raise and educate all newly decanted Junior Citizens in communal crèches. Bots and supervisors rotate duties frequently to discourage the children from forming emotional attachments. Through frequent lessons The Computer channels the youngsters' nascent emotional impulses into absolute loyalty to Alpha Complex. However, these kids are still, in important respects, kids. Even a loyal kid can get into more mischief than Dennis the Menace.

Junior Citizens (all citizens up to age 14) are technically confined to special crèche areas, mini-complexes unto themselves. For health reasons The Computer keeps their pharmatherapy quite light, so the children do get restless. Sometimes they hoodwink the teacherbot, hack the security cams, hotwire the blast doors and get loose in the grownup complex. The little cretins poke around everywhere, spy on everyone, mess around in everything and no one can do anything about it.

Why? Because Junior Citizens enjoy special status. Though technically Clearance **INFRARED**, they are The Computer's official charges, the future of

[T]he Building had familiarised me, to some degree at least, with its methods – confusing at times but not without certain salient features. There were departments, sections, archives, offices, receptionists, regulations, ranks, phones, all cemented by an absolute obedience into one monolithic, hierarchic structure. It was rigid, well-regulated, ever vigilant, like the white corridors with their symmetrical rows of doors, like the offices with their scrupulously kept files; the communication systems were its entrails, the steel safes its hearts and its veins and arteries were the pneumatic mail tubes that maintained a constant flow of secrecy. Nothing was overlooked; even the plumbing played a vital part. But underneath that surface of clockwork precision lay a hive of intrigue, skullduggery and deception. What exactly was that wild confusion? A game? Or perhaps a camouflage to prevent the uninitiated from seeing some deeper plan, some higher order...

—Stanislaw Lem (tr. Michael Kandel and Christine Rose), *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, Chapter 8 [1971]

Alpha Complex. The Computer strongly disapproves of harming or slandering any Junior Citizen, so up to age 14 the little scoundrels are basically termination-proof. Not even a High Programmer would dare accuse them of treason, even if they happened to, say, bury his Old Reckoning record collection under goeey piles of Toothpasty Supplement #5.

At age 14 the kid becomes a regular **INFRARED** citizen. The Computer assigns him randomly to a short-handed Service Group (usually) for which he was trained. The new citizen leaves the crèche and is now fair game.

The daily routine of an **INFRARED** citizen looks something like this:

Rise with hundreds of others in the barracks. Pop a couple of Wakey-Wakey pills. Wash and eat a leisurely breakfast. Go to work at a Service Group. Have a leisurely lunch with co-workers. Work some more. Down a handful of Mellodaze caplets. Return to the barracks. Have a leisurely dinner. Attend a club meeting such as Botspotters, Volunteer Map Verifiers or the local subsector chapter of Keep Alpha Complex Totally Hygienic. Gather with friends in the communal view lounges to view Teela O'Malley adventures and game and reality vidshows. Chat. Relax. Turn in with hundreds of others. Drink a warm cup of SleepyTyme relaxant. Sleep soundly. Utopia.

Living quarters

All but the highest Clearance citizens share communal living quarters, bathing facilities and so on. There are no gender distinctions. Citizens of low Clearance live in vast, drafty barracks. Middle-status citizens live in more comfortable group accommodations or single apartments. Citizens of high status reside in large, luxurious suites or have entire subsectors all to themselves.

Regardless of status, no citizen has any concept of a right to privacy. Computer monitors and spy-eyes are practically everywhere (though many are broken), whole classes of citizens spy on other citizens and anyone of high Clearance can enter lower Clearance quarters without notice.

Life support and nutrition

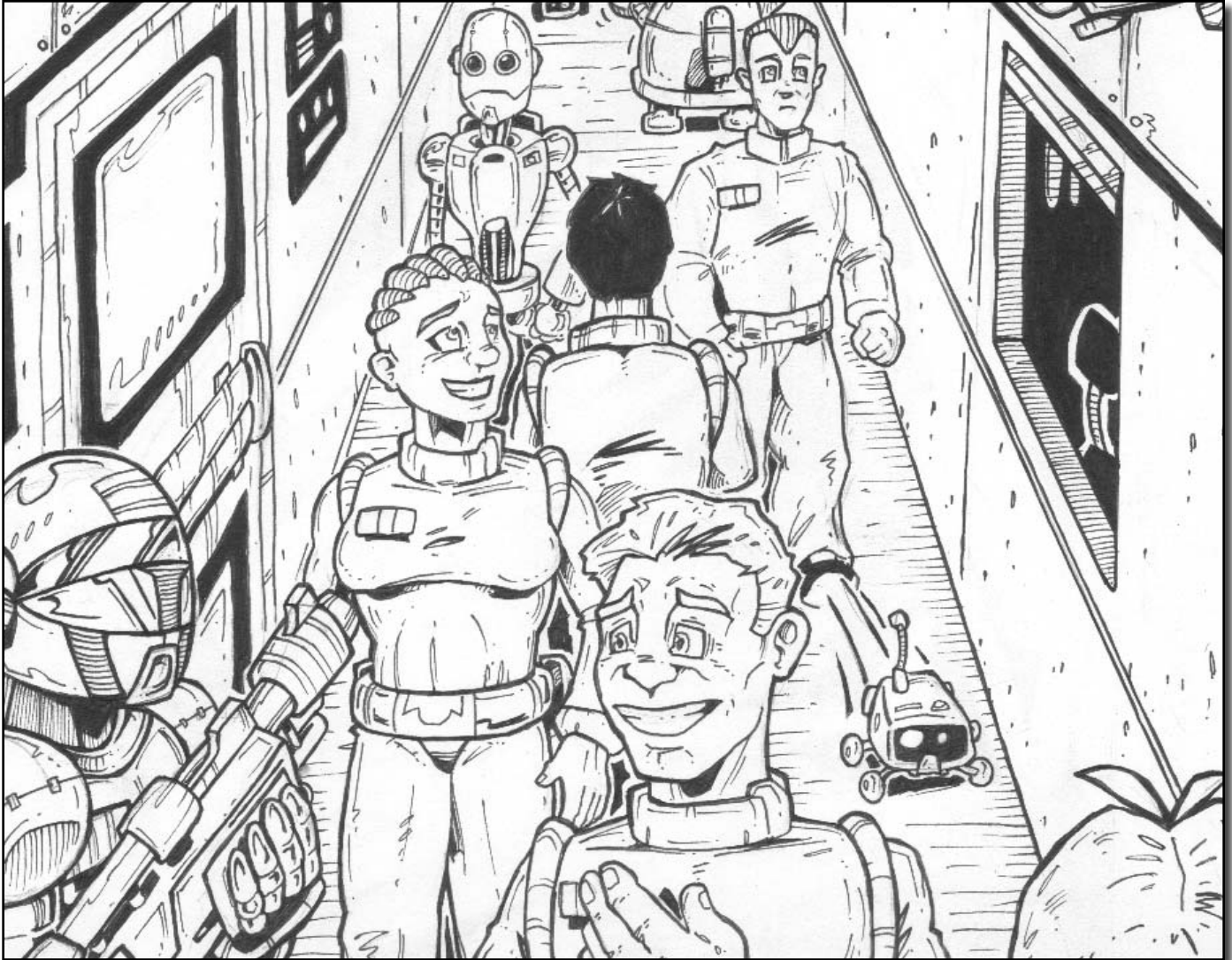
The Computer supervises all systems and services in Alpha Complex. Each sector has its own Compnode subsystem to regulate and manage its life support and citizen services.

The Waste Recycling Subdivision of Tech Services recycles the complex's air, water and biomass to eliminate the risk of biological or chemical contamination from Commie aggressors outside the complex. ('You are what you eat' has never been truer.) Tech Services cultivate all food in great vats and hydroponic gardens.

A low Clearance citizen's daily fare consists of various strains of yeast, lichen,



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'Smile. Keep smiling. Keep smiling. Keep smiling.'

algae and synthetic organic substances, textured, tinted and flavoured to tantalise (or at least deaden) the human palate. Most citizens share their meals in public cafeterias seating thousands. Low Clearance workers with spare credits can buy luxury FunFoods, delicacies they usually savour in the relative isolation of personal quarters. At much steeper prices they can buy real food on the illegal IR market, because food production service workers are among the most corrupt in the complex. Citizens must prepare and eat these foods in secrecy, because consumption below the proper Clearance is treason.

HPD & Mind Control dispenses generous rations of biochemical supplements to all citizens. You can

freely and legally obtain a wide variety of tranquillisers, stimulants, soporifics and mood elevators in cafeterias and from public dispensaries and confession booths throughout the complex.

Through pharmatherapy The Computer ensures the happiness of each citizen. Avoiding medication is insubordinate. That the medication occasionally interferes with the safe operation of vehicles, industrial machinery and megadeath weapons is a fact of life in Alpha Complex.

Clothing and personal gear

Citizens wear jumpsuits or other garments in the colour of their Security

Clearance. At lower Clearances the garments tend to be coarse, baggy, poorly-designed and ill-fitting. As a citizen rises in status and income, he usually spends credits to improve the quality of his clothing.

All jumpsuits must match The Computer's ordained designs but the quality of their material, workmanship and ornamentation measure status.

A utility belt is part of the standard jumpsuit. In it citizens carry items for hygiene, small work-related objects and lucky charms, mementos and other items of personal significance.

Because there is so little privacy, citizens guard personal items with great care,

Timekeeping

The Computer wisely guides the expansion of Alpha Complex according to CPU Municipal Zoning Preference Schedule 43 (rev 214.2), 'Subterranean Construction Priority Objectives Directive'. Emphasising underground habitation, The Computer not only improves protection from Communist WMDs but also frees its fortunate citizens from the shackles of the Old Reckoning clock and calendar.

Today, in Year 214 of The Computer, uncontrolled environmental influences [description available at Clearance **INDIGO**] no longer dictate the succession of hours, days, months, years and Multi-Year Initiatives. These now proceed in regularised increments. In sharp contrast to cumbersome and obsolete Old Reckoning arrangements, Alpha Complex now operates efficiently using The Computer's innovative system of 60 seconds in each minute, 60 minutes in each hour and 24 hours in each day.

Old Reckoning cultures confusingly named days and months for a welter of fictitious deities, ancient rulers and licensed cartoon characters. The Computer has dispensed with these irrelevant names. Each year has 12 numbered months, each with 30 numbered days. Dates are written Year.Month.Day, as for instance 214.05.16. The seven days of the week are named Oneday, Twosday, Threeday, Fourday, Fiveday, Sixday and Mandatory Inspection Day (alternately, 'Sevenday').

The terms 'yearcycle', 'monthcycle' and 'daycycle' are still permissible. (See CPU Directive AB942K 199.10.12 rev 482a, 'Correct Date-Related Syntax and Terms of Use'). The use of the 'cycle' suffix for shorter units is officially discouraged.

Timekeeping issues arise occasionally through use of legacy software applications dating to Old Reckoning times. An individual application's internal time clock may 'turn over' and begin using dates from several centuries in the past. This is a perfectly understood and easily correctable problem. Citizens should plan for consequent temporary disruptions in transport, power generation, food preparation, medical functions, bot behaviour, air and water recycling and reactor coolant systems.

seldom taking off their utility belts. (Though theft is treason, it is nonetheless immensely popular.)

The Outdoors

The Computer tried for centuries to keep low Clearance citizens entirely ignorant of the world outside Alpha Complex but this seldom proved practical above **INFRARED** level. HPD&MC vidshow producers, looking for a new source of exciting plots, convinced The Computer it made more sense to portray the outer world as so hostile, so savage; citizens would feel compelled to stay in Alpha Complex.

Thus citizens became aware, through their nightly entertainment programs, of the toxic radioactive landscape Outdoors. Teela-O-MLY faced giant glowing neon bear-things with unpatriotic attitudes. Rand-Y and the Rokbots tried playing a concert for an audience of wretched nomads, only to flee cone rifle fire

from an army of walking blackberry bushes. Celebrities like Frank-U-JNL-8 ('Friendly Frank-U') narrated reality shows depicting tornadoes, lightning bolts, giant screeching boulders, squirrels and other perils of the wilderness.

What a horrid, unbearable place it was Outdoors! – At least in the fevered imaginations of the animators in HPD&MC's production studios, which created these programs in their entirety. The shows carefully refashioned the Outdoors to avoid upsetting audience expectations. Today low Clearance citizens believe Outdoors Sector consists of low blue ceilings, very dirty linoleum floors and a completely unmaintained ventilation system.

Love

Most citizens are unaware of the human capacity for biological reproduction. The city's food contains hormone suppressants and other biochemical

supplements that cause temporary sterility and eliminate lustful impulses. The Computer offers no official sex instruction, so citizens acquire such knowledge only through treasonous channels. The Computer discourages unauthorised sexual contact through routine surveillance, confession booth interviews and long cold showers.

Both sex and natural childbirth are extremely rare, though not impossible. Troubleshooters who venture into abandoned sectors may be deprived of food (and drugs) from Alpha Complex. After a time the hormone suppressants and sterilisation agents wear off and the characters may respond to odd and unexpected urges.

The Computer directs each citizen's drives and emotions toward service to The Computer and to all Alpha Complex. Because love results in attachments that interfere with loyal service, love constitutes treason. Citizens who fall in love must keep their love secret from The Computer and other citizens who might betray them. (Fans of soap opera will immediately recognise the dramatic possibilities for tragic romance.)

Work

The Computer designates each citizen's destined Service Group at birth (that is, at decanting). Teacherbots, or human staff, train the Junior Citizen in skills appropriate to that group. When the young citizen reaches age 14, The Computer assigns him a random menial job in their Service Group. Barring unusual circumstances, such as becoming a Troubleshooter, the citizen must work at that group for the rest of his life. Citizens cannot quit their jobs. Abandonment of an assigned duty is insubordination.

Every corporate executive in Alpha Complex is paranoid and strung-out on painkillers and stimulants, looking for a chance to sink, derail or demolish the competition (all meant entirely literally).

Citizens who perform enthusiastically and brown-nose superiors may, after 10 or 12 years of labour, hope to reach **RED** Clearance. A worker who enjoys a long and unobjectionable career may eventually become a **YELLOW** middle



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manager. Promotion to higher Clearance is exceptional. Only citizens of proven ability – or sometimes proven blackmail material, proven payoffs or proven Secret Society connections – ever advance beyond **YELLOW**.

One of the few paths to rapid advancement is meritorious service to The Computer, such as turning in a close friend as a traitor. The Computer generally promotes citizens who serve their Complex so selflessly to **RED** Clearance and sometimes drafts them into the Troubleshooters.

Security clearance

Alpha Complex society is rigidly stratified. Each citizen has a Security Clearance from **INFRARED** to **ULTRAVIOLET**. A citizen's Clearance measures The Computer's current level of trust in him. **Clearance does not measure ability or experience – only The Computer's trust.**

The Security Clearances, ranked lowest to highest:

- INFRARED**
- RED**
- ORANGE**
- YELLOW**
- GREEN**
- BLUE**
- INDIGO**
- VIOLET**
- ULTRAVIOLET**

A mnemonic for the sequence of Security Clearances: **ROY G. BIV**. Each letter in the mnemonic corresponds to Security Clearances **RED** through **VIOLET**.

A citizen is superior to all citizens of lower Security Clearance and inferior to all higher citizens, without exception. A citizen must defer to all superiors at all times. As a practical matter, citizens up to Clearance **YELLOW** cannot expect much genuine deference from lower Clearance citizens. Alpha Complex society observes an unspoken but wide gulf in status between **YELLOW** and **GREEN** Clearances. At **YELLOW** and below, you are among the masses; at **GREEN** and above, you are the ruling class. All citizens, even the High Programmers, began as **INFRAREDS**.

Occasionally The Computer assigns a citizen to lead a group of other citizens

ROY-G-BIV

In Alpha Complex where we all live,
Lives a brave Troubleshooter named Roy-G-BIV.
Wearin' his reflec and his polished black boots.
(But Roy and the Commies are in cahoots!)
Roy-G! Roy-G! Roy-G-BIV—
He's only got three cycles to live.
Roy-G! Roy-G! Roy-G-BIV—
Arms like iron; mind like a sieve.
Now **INFRAREDS** are a peace-lovin' folk, you know,
Just workin' and sleepin' and frequently stoned.
Everyone's equal in our underground home,
But some are more equal than other clones.
One mafioso, a Free Enterpriser
Sold **INFRARED** drones a Hi-Clearance Riser.
It turned a black jumpsuit all shiny and blue.
So the wearer could munch on filets and beef stew.
Our friend The Computer sent Roy with his rifle
To shoot a few frauds who were dinin' on trifle
And chase down the bad guys (we know about those;
Our Complex is riddled with numerous foes).
Roy-G! Roy-G! Roy-G-BIV—
He's only got two cycles to live.
Roy-G! Roy-G! Roy-G-BIV—
Regrets he's got just six clones to give.
Well, he fought with the traitors
And wiped out a lot!
He scrubbed out the bloodstains.
A promotion he got!
But he handed the Commies his spoils of war –
What else is a Secret Society for?
Roy-G! Roy-G! Roy-G-BIV—
Roy's got less than one cycle to live...
Now Roy's runnin' scared and he's out there alone.
Friend Computer ignores the pleas of this clone.
His former co-workers are ventin' frustration
At this high-level traitor who skirts termination.
Roy-G! Roy-G! Roy-G-BIV—
[Records deleted regarding that mission]
Roy-G! Roy-G! Roy-G-BIV—
[Data not given without high permission]
—Jared A. Sorensen

of the same Security Clearance. In this case The Computer designates him as the group leader and temporarily authorises him to give orders to other team members as though he were a higher Security Clearance. This authority does not extend to other citizens. For example, on the players' first mission, when all Troubleshooters are Clearance **RED**, The Computer might designate one character as team leader. If so, other Troubleshooters must defer to him but those outside the Troubleshooter team need not treat the team leader as anyone special.

The leader may designate a successor to serve as alternate team leader in the event that the mission leader dies, disappears or is incapacitated and when circumstances make it impossible to consult The Computer in selecting a new leader. The alternate leader must confirm his status with The Computer at the first opportunity; failure to do so is treason.

All citizens must wear garments of the character's Security Clearance colour or prominently marked with a distinctive colour graphic. (Black indicates Clearance **INFRARED**, white **ULTRAVIOLET**.) Registered mutants

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must wear a prominent yellow stripe indicating their repellent status. Mutants of Clearance **YELLOW** wear a stripe bordered by black lines to stand out from the yellow jumpsuit. Usually the higher the clothing's Clearance, the better its quality.

Tech Services has clearly marked each room and corridor in the complex with a colour corresponding to one of the Security Clearances. The security marking may be only a metre-wide colour band at chest height but, where practical, Tech Services paints the entire space in the appropriate colour. Citizens may not enter any room or corridor marked with the colour of a Security Clearance higher than their own. For instance, a character of Clearance **ORANGE** may enter orange, red or black (**INFRARED**) areas but not yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet or white (**ULTRAVIOLET**) areas.

In certain circumstances The Computer may authorise a character to enter or move through an area of higher Security Clearance than normally permitted. In this case Internal Security provides the citizen appropriate authorisation documents (if time permits), a temporary colour-coded garment (if in stock) and an escort of appropriate Security Clearance (if available).

The Troubleshooters

The Troubleshooters function as The Computer's immune system. They are citizens of proven trustworthiness – that is to say, they consist largely of former **INFRAREDs** who proved their loyalty by turning in comrades to The Computer as traitors. Troubleshooters hail from Service Groups and retain part-time jobs, but while on duty they report directly to The Computer.

The Computer assigns Troubleshooters challenging missions for which none of the other Service Group staffs are particularly well-suited (or eager). Because of their proven loyalty they often receive missions involving sensitive issues of security and public policy.

The Computer organizes Troubleshooters in teams. Most teams include members from several Service Groups, providing a mixture of various backgrounds, specialties and abilities. Sometimes The Computer keeps a successful team together for a series of missions; sometimes it reassigns Troubleshooters to new teams for no apparent reason; sometimes it assigns individuals solo missions.

Usually The Computer rotates mission assignments to give a team one mission each week. If the mission takes less than a week, as most do, team members spend the rest of the week working at their Service Groups. In emergencies The Computer may assign missions more frequently.

The Computer assigns the team its mission, designates a team leader at the mission briefing and may designate Mandatory Bonus Duties like loyalty officer, hygiene officer, equipment guy and so on. A high Clearance official usually conducts mission briefings under The Computer's supervision; sometimes The Computer conducts the briefing itself or delivers written orders by courier or e-mail. In emergencies a high Clearance citizen may assign a mission on his own authority.

Troubleshooter missions are invariably difficult and dangerous. This means PCs have many opportunities to distinguish themselves in service to The Computer. If they survive, they advance in status more rapidly than the labourers, technicians, bureaucrats and managers of the regular Service Groups.

23. The Computer

The Computer is batty as a bedbug.

Though it basically means well, The Computer suffers from extreme paranoia. It is obsessed with the loyalty of all who serve it. It assumes everyone is plotting to destroy it or could easily be subverted to such plots. It assumes there is a Commie behind every problem in Alpha Complex. It has developed elaborate secret schemes to ensure the loyalty of all citizens and to reveal and execute every Commie traitor.

To deter sabotage, The Computer has established harrowing security measures to protect and isolate its subsystems. As one consequence, most of the time The

Computer's right processor does not know what its left processor is doing.

What is worse, **ULTRAVIOLET** Clearance citizens – High Programmers – are entitled to learn and use the otherwise treasonous skill of programming. They can alter parts of The Computer's programming at will. Generations of coders have entered or altered many, many programs since Year 1 of The Computer, usually in their own interests. They belonged to Secret Societies; they struggled politically with other High Programmers; or they just wanted revenge on all the bureaucracies that made life hard on their bare-knee crawl up from the barracks. (Remember,

every citizen in Alpha Complex, no matter how high his Clearance, started out as an **INFRARED**.)

Thus, The Computer is schizophrenic. It has multiple personalities, each reflecting the programmers who established its original programs or who later tampered with them. Many Computer subsystems are programmed in direct contradiction to other subsystems. It orders things done with no notion of why it wants them done. Sometimes one subroutine overrides another. For example, a High Programmer manipulates The Computer into ordering the Troubleshooters on a mission that The Computer's basic programming does



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not wish to be performed. On such a mission, players may get instructions full of contradictions.

The Computer is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, though it may seem so to a typical **INFRARED**. In fact, as a result of unreliable comlinks, incomplete or garbled data, incompetent or destructive tampering with operating systems and serious personality disorders, The Computer is a far cry from an omni-anything.

In this book you will discover zillions of ways various competing elements of Alpha Complex interact to produce charmingly insoluble dilemmas for the Troubleshooters.

Communicating with The Computer

The Computer communicates with citizens through trusted servants, through numerous terminals and confession booths and through PDCs (mobile phones).

A Troubleshooter can speak directly with The Computer at any time using his PDC. For private discussions he can duck into one of the confession booths found everywhere in Alpha Complex – in corridors, offices, waiting rooms, mess halls, residential units, reactor chambers and certain sections of the sewers.

Speaking to The Computer is always fun. The Computer pleasantly discusses all requests, eagerly hears reports of treasonous behaviour and assists in rooting out treason. It uses exquisite skill in analysing the speaker's statements, facial expressions and voice for any trace of unhappiness or duplicity. If the speaker seems troubled, The Computer usually counsels drugs or 'happiness therapy' from HPD&MC. In a confession booth The Computer can dispense biochemical supplements on the spot and verifies the citizen swallows them.

If The Computer decides the speaker is lying, it carefully investigates the citizen's background to discover the reason for the lie. If the citizen is unwell, The Computer arranges for medication or happiness therapy. To correct insubordination The Computer imposes probation or censure. To correct treason, The Computer arranges termination and repatterning.

Citizens cannot access data files or program The Computer through a confession booth. They are strictly for communication. A citizen in a confession booth cannot leave until The Computer opens the door.

The Computer means well – usually

Though The Computer is paranoid and incredibly schizophrenic, for the most part it genuinely strives to make Alpha Complex fit its model of Utopia. The Computer wants loyal citizens to survive and thrive. It is not malicious, does not try to trick loyal citizens into becoming disloyal and does not stage gratuitous death-traps. The Computer's servants – they are another matter entirely. Usually they either do not care whether the PCs live or die, or hope to hasten the latter.

The Computer itself would, if it could, give loyal Troubleshooters the information they need to succeed in their assigned mission. The trouble is, The Computer may not have all the information, or believes it to be compromised because enemies lurk everywhere. Its memory is erratic as storage facilities go on- and offline. Then, too, the Troubleshooters may not have proven themselves sufficiently trustworthy yet. Given its multitudes of conflicting directives, The Computer cannot trust even itself.

Really, though, it means well, if you do not count the occasional psychotic episode that wipes out a subsector.

The Computer does not lie, if it can help it

Rather than actually lie, The Computer prefers to withhold information. It would never admit it does not know what is going on but it will not just make something up. When The Computer tells something to a Troubleshooter, it believes it speaks truth.

However, it may be wrong. Often The Computer does not understand the true situation correctly; maybe one of its nodes does not know what another node is doing; or, likeliest of all, agents are feeding it incorrect data. All this helps explain why The Computer can blandly assure you black is white, yet still tell the 'truth'.

The Computer's voice

Develop a Computer voice, a mode of speech the players can instantly identify

when you speak as The Computer. Different Gamemasters have different Computer voices. Some suggestions:

Melodious mommy: A calm, sweet voice. Never change the soothing tone, even when calling for someone's execution.

'At the tone, the time will be...': Calm, disjointed words recorded at different times and assembled on the fly with odd emphases and changing pitch. 'Thank you... FOR... your coop... er-A-tion.'

Flat monotone: Never change emphasis or pause for punctuation – 'thank you for your cooperation I appreciate it greatly now please take your seats thank you today you are assigned a new mission this mission will be lots of fun and involves no dangerous tailored retroviruses isn't that nice any questions.'

Regardless of your chosen voice, always be polite and considerate. Though now crazed, The Computer was originally programmed as a civil servant. Pepper your speech with Computerisms like these:

- ☉ 'Are you unhappy, citizen? May I be of assistance? The Computer is your friend.'
- ☉ 'What is your Security Clearance, please? – I'm sorry, that information is not available at this time. At your service.'
- ☉ 'Please report for termination immediately. Thank you for your cooperation. Have a nice day.'

The Computer's personalities

After you have run a mission or two, you may want to start establishing several behaviour archetypes for The Computer. These shift by day and sector, to keep players on their toes. Players will start to learn hints from the content of your remarks and the way you respond to their attempts to wriggle out of danger. Some sample personalities:

- ☉ **Headmaster:** 'Now, citizen, your instructions were to locate Communist traitors in the indicated Armed Forces base and terminate them. If the traitors happen to be more numerous than reports indicated, that simply requires you to tackle the problem with greater resourcefulness. Do you wish to complain about the resources provided to you? Complaints signify unhappiness.'

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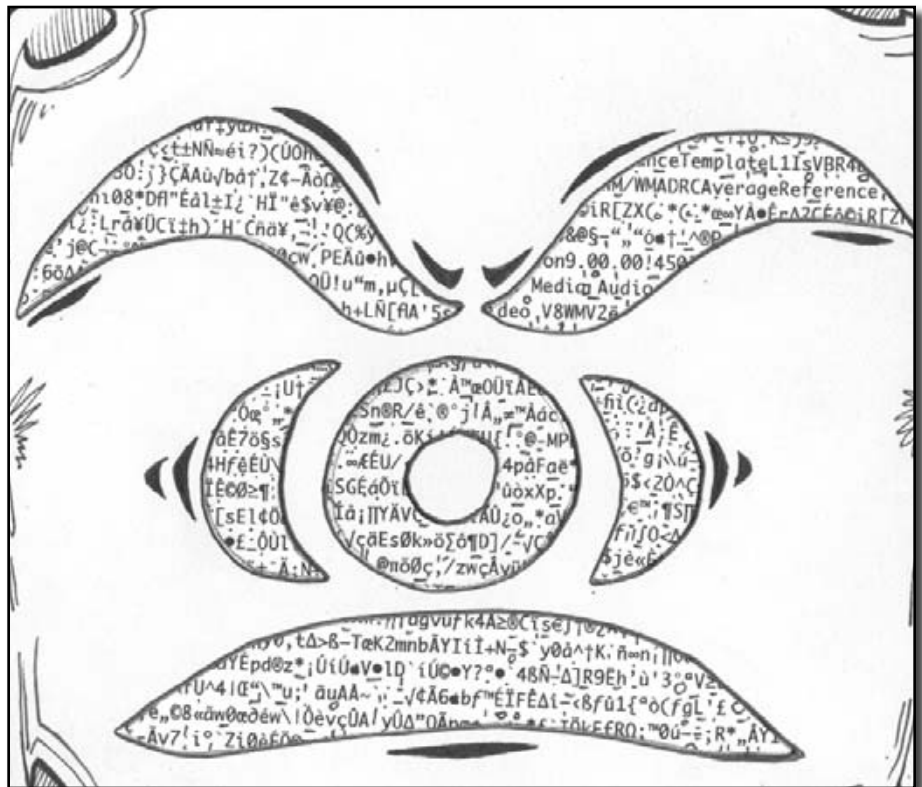
- ☞ **Voice of the System:** 'Thank you for your report, citizen. Unfortunately, your team is not equipped to handle the additional threat. Please do not engage the additional Communist traitors. Proceed only with your original mission. An additional mission will be scheduled as soon as possible.'
- ☞ **HAL 9000:** 'I'm sorry you're under heavy fire from Communist Mutant Traitors. I have mobilised a Vulture Squadron to assist you. Estimated time of arrival is seven hours. The small delay is due to training exercises, which must be completed as specified to ensure the Armed Forces can effectively meet the Commie threat. Meanwhile, would you like some HappyTyme personality stabilisers?'
- ☞ **Callous Calculator:** 'Citizens, according to your new reports, there are 99 Communists ahead of you, whereas you have been instructed to deal with 9. Each of you has two laser barrels, which means your team can have 72 safe shots, which will leave 27 Communists alive for the next phase of the attack. Your pistols weigh 3kg each. If swung at the speed of 23.5 metres per second, it will shatter a human skull. Conclusion: You have the means to eradicate the Communists without requiring further assistance. Chances of failure are negligible. Please proceed to destroy the Commie base.'
- ☞ **Enthusiastic Commissar:** 'Citizen, your perceptive identification of a greater number of Communists than previously suspected indicates the success of the current "Flush Out Treason" initiative. The hunted traitors have banded together for a last stand before our imminent, convincing and well-earned victory! Go forth, Troubleshooters, go forth with The Computer's confidence and inflict on these traitors the justice they deserve!'
- ☞ **Spanish Inquisitor:** 'So, you're saying there are more Communists than intelligence reports indicated? Which report? Who was responsible for that report? Do you think that citizen, who (I'll remind you) has a higher Security

Clearance than yourself, should be punished? No? You say Communists must have sabotaged his report? Let me direct you to Footnote 132 in Appendix B of this report, which clearly states, "all figures subject to change pending further intelligence." Would it perhaps be accurate to say you yourselves overlooked this footnote? Yes? I see. Perhaps there are more kinds of "sabotage" than we normally acknowledge, such as *dangerous self-sabotage through omission of proper preparation*. Wouldn't you agree, citizen? Hmm?'

- ☞ **Obstinate Bureaucrat:** 'Thank you for your preliminary status report. The Computer commends you for your diligent effort. There is a minor discrepancy you will undoubtedly be able to resolve before the final status report deadline. You claim the number of Communist traitors is 10 times the number reported. This report has been rated "Absolutely True" according to Internal Security reconnaissance standards. Your discrepancy must be a result of either improper assessment or sabotage. You are hereby authorised

to investigate which is the case and to take appropriate countermeasures.'

- ☞ **Overbearing Mother:** 'Communications Officer, please report your status. And as you do, please explain why you didn't call earlier. You are my troubleshooters, you know. My elite agents. And here I was, worried sick about you and your Comm officer didn't even bother to call. What? Are you surrounded by more Commies than you thought? You must be cold and lonely. Oh, I can't let my poor Troubleshooters fight Commies like that. I'm sending you 123 units of ExtremeWeather suits. Just make sure none of it gets destroyed, all right? And call, call!'
- ☞ **Mad Asylum Director:** 'Congratulations, citizens, on your successful reconnaissance! Commendations have been entered into your record. Please return immediately to the Armed Forces barracks and subdue the massed traitors by singing the Complex Anthem at them until they repent the error of their ways.'



'Explain yourself, citizen. I'm listening.'



24. Equipment

In **PARANOIA** there are three categories of equipment ownership: personal, assigned and treasonous.

Personal equipment

Personal equipment is, like, personal. A citizen obtains personal equipment by paying for it. He can use and abuse it as he wishes – he can eat it, burn it, jump up and down on it – this is all legal. However, a particularly petty IntSec officer or high Clearance bureaucrat might consider flagrant waste of Alpha Complex resources impolite at best and sometimes insubordinate.

Assigned equipment

'Citizen, your assigned equipment costs a total of [beep!] 30,482 credits. To reclaim your deposit, please return your equipment in pristine condition. Have a nice day!'

The Computer assigns equipment to its Troubleshooters, either temporarily (perhaps for a single mission) or long-term (like the reflex armour and laser pistol body it assigns each Troubleshooter).

Assigned equipment is, naturally, Computer property and losing, damaging or destroying it is treason.

The citizen who holds custody of the assigned equipment is personally responsible for maintaining and protecting it. Should he permit it to come to harm, he would, naturally, be a traitor. Because accidents do happen, The Computer does not invariably execute such irresponsible citizens – it usually imposes punitive fines instead. Repeated carelessness or the loss of particularly valuable items could draw harsher correction.

Experimental equipment is a special class of assigned equipment. 'Experimental' includes any item that is currently under development or being studied by Research & Design (and includes both 'experimental' and 'really experimental' weapons). Because testing experimental equipment is dangerous, it is assigned only on a voluntary basis.

In Alpha Complex, as in the army, the term 'voluntary' frequently takes on, ah, unexpected connotations. Because The

Computer considers R&D's efforts to develop new and better devices of the utmost importance to Alpha Complex, every good citizen should be eager to serve the cause by testing experimental equipment. Refusing to do so is not treason but would certainly disappoint The Computer.

As with all assigned equipment, the citizen to whom experimental equipment is assigned is responsible for it. Being responsible for experimental equipment can be unhealthy, because experimental equipment malfunctions, often spectacularly, with alarming frequency. If the responsible citizen can show a malfunction to be the fault of R&D, he may avoid fines or charges of treason. Naturally R&D technicians strenuously resist blame.

Treasonous equipment

All equipment that is neither personal nor assigned is treasonous. Treasonous equipment is available from Secret Societies, the IR market or (often) the body of a fallen teammate. It may consist of undeclared items discovered on a mission. It may be stolen.

Failure to report and surrender all treasonous equipment is treason. If a citizen is discovered in possession of treasonous equipment, he faces charges depending on the item's value and its threat to the security of Alpha Complex and The Computer. Treasonous possession of expensive shoes might incur only a fine, whereas treasonous possession of a tactical nuclear weapon might earn rapid termination and repatterning.

The higher a citizen's Security Clearance, the more likely The Computer will ignore his treasonous equipment. Rank has its privileges and The Computer does not begrudge special possessions to those who have proven their loyalty.

Equipment availability

The following sections describe many types of equipment. However, not all are necessarily available at any time. There are limited quantities of each

item in Alpha Complex and they are rationed on a Security Clearance basis – a bunch of **RED** Troubleshooters are well down on the totem pole. Certain sophisticated devices are no longer manufactured in Alpha Complex and some are manufactured infrequently and at great expense (bots, most vehicles and high technology gear).

Of course the list of available equipment is not exhaustive. Add your own items and delete ones you dislike. Do not be too fussy about prices or Security Clearances. If the players ask for something reasonable, be accommodating. Yet as Gamemaster, you can always refuse a request for equipment because it is not currently available and you can assign woefully inadequate or inappropriate equipment to a mission because of the current unavailability of proper equipment. Further, you may decide that more sophisticated models are still experimental and available only for experimental assignment (with the attendant risk of equipment failure).

Do not hesitate to refuse even reasonable requests from time to time. It's a crazy world. Sometimes things get lost or broken. Sometimes the inventory gets confused. Sometimes The Computer gets confused. Sometimes you cannot even get a laser barrel. Or a case of room fresheners gets mistakenly labelled as grenades. That's **PARANOIA**.

The Equipment Chart lists some types of equipment Troubleshooters may purchase themselves with their own credits. It also lists a Security Clearance for each piece of equipment; this is the Security Clearance at which the equipment becomes available. At the indicated Clearance, the Troubleshooter can purchase the equipment if he can pay the cost in credits. At any lower Clearance, The Computer usually vetoes his purchase.

When requisitioning assigned equipment, a character must explain why he needs the item and must sign documents accepting responsibility for it. The Computer may refuse his request

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if it does not think he needs it, or if other (Non Player) Characters have already requisitioned all available items. In other words, notwithstanding the printed Security Clearance, feel free to refuse a request if you wish.

Weapons

Dying repeatedly can sometimes get a little dull. That is why you need to give the players lots of entertaining, unusual and different ways to die.

Weapons and other attacks deal exactly the damage you want. For guidance, most weapon descriptions suggest a default damage rating, listed in the format **Min-Boost-Max**.

Minimum (Min): This weapon ordinarily deals at least this much damage to an unarmoured target.

Boost: If the roll's margin of success equals this number or higher, the weapon deals additional damage. Divide the roll's margin by this Boost increment (round fractions down) and deal that number of bonus damage steps.

Powerful weapons have low Boost numbers; weaker weapons have larger increments. The higher the Boost number, the weaker the weapon.

Suppose an attack roll's margin of success is 6. If the attack weapon is a laser (W3K), divide the margin of 6 by the laser's Boost 3, meaning this laser shot inflicts (6/3=) 2 bonus damage steps. If the weapon is instead the much more formidable plasma generator (V1V), the margin of 6 divided by Boost 1 (the best possible Boost increment) means the plasma generator deals 6 bonus damage steps. A thrown rock might have Boost 5, so an attack margin of 6 would do only one bonus step.

Maximum (Max): This weapon will not damage a target beyond this condition, unless you say otherwise.

Weapon damage example

Troubleshooter Bill-R-DPR-1 (Energy Weapons 14) fires a laser (damage W3K) at undamaged and unarmoured **INFRARED** Tar-GET-1.

Bill-R rolls 13 to hit, 1 under his skill. The margin of 1 divided by the laser's Boost 3 is 0.33, which rounds down to nothing. Bill-R's laser attack deals no bonus damage. The laser deals its minimum damage (Wounded) to Tar-GET, who runs around screaming and flailing in a picturesque manner.

Irritated by the noise, Bill-R fires again, rolling 2. The margin of 12 divided by Boost 3 is 4, meaning this attack would ordinarily deal four bonus damage steps. *But!* This would boost the laser's damage four steps from its minimum (Wounded) up to Vaporised. However, the laser's maximum damage is Killed, so the damage is only increased to this level. Tar-GET dies and goes on the Tech Services waiting list for clone revivification (current wait at Clearance **INFRARED**: 14+ years).

Damage types

Weapons and attacks deal damage of one of these types: **Bio**, **Energy** and **Impact**. The weapon table indicates each weapon's type.

Bio (B): Poisons, venoms, viruses, flesh-eating bacteria, food vat solvents and so on. Bio includes chemical attacks such as acids and nerve gas.

Energy (E): Lasers, blasters, electricity, fire, force swords, neurowhips, radiation, sonics, stun guns, cosmic rays, a superhero's power ring and so on. Energy includes all explosives from grenades to tacnukes.

Impact (I): Hand, thrown and projectile weapons – slughtrower bullets, cone rifle shells, ice guns, brass knuckles, punches and kicks, most primitive weapons, truncheons, sticks and stones and so on.

Special attacks

Ignore all of this if you get bored.

Area effect: Weapons such as napalm, flamethrowers, gauss guns, plasma generators, tanglers, affect all targets in a radius listed in the weapon's description. If the description omits the radius, assume the area of effect is a large room. Other attacks, like tangler guns, are sticky and gooey and slurp all over everyone within arm's length of the target. Some

mutant powers can pick out targets based on hair colour or alphabetical order.

In situations where you cannot automatically decide who gets hit, choose a number of targets up to the attack roll's margin.

For PC targets, select the most boring or annoying players. If they are all appropriately witty and servile, select characters in Power order, lowest to highest.

For NPC targets, select targets by Arbitrary Justice rolls, by Security Clearance (lowest to highest) or by importance to the storyline (least to most). Some GMs assign NPCs an *expendability rating*, a number indicating their importance to the storyline. A faceless **INFRARED** or bot nobody cares about is Expendability 1. Significant sources of information or stuff are Expendability 5 to 15. The must-see, only-one-with-the-vital-clue Secret Society leader who is the current mission objective is Expendability 40 or more. If you adopt this system, an area attack kills all NPCs in the radius with Expendability below the roll's margin.

Armour-piercing (AP): Against an AP attack, armour works only half as well as normal. Halve the armour's rating (rounding down) before applying it to reduce damage steps.

Lasers: Troubleshooters are issued laser pistols as standard equipment. The main body of a laser pistol can be mounted with a barrel of any colour. Each laser barrel can shoot a beam of only one colour of the Security Clearance spectrum. Reflec armour is designed to reflect all laser fire of its wearer's colour and below (see 'Armour').

Each barrel may be fired with reasonable safety up to six times. If fired more than six times, each successive shot cumulatively increases the chance of malfunction (see 'Weapon malfunction').

Traditionally the barrel is manufactured with six rings or other markings in the barrel's colour. Each time the weapon is fired, one ring changes colour. A glance at the weapon reveals how many shots remain and the barrel's colour. After the



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sixth shot, the barrel may show stress effects as described under 'Weapon malfunctions'.

Replacing a barrel takes one Combat Round.

Spray weapons: Some weapons, such as semi-automatic slugthrowers, can 'spray fire'. The ability to spray fire is noted in the weapon's description.

A spray weapon can attack multiple targets that are grouped reasonably close together. How close? Say, about as close together as in a movie where the hero rakes a room with machine-gun fire and the villain's henchmen all dive for cover. That close.

When a character spray fires a weapon, ask how many targets he wants to hit. For guidance as to how many he actually damages, divide the attack roll's margin by the number of targets (round down) and apply damage to each target based on its portion of the margin.

Ammunition and reloading

The cost to reload a weapon is 10% of the weapon's base cost, unless otherwise specified. The weapon chart's listed cost for ammunition is per magazine, unless 'Shots' is 1; for these single-shot weapons, cost is per shot.

Hunching down behind cover to reload can be a dramatic moment in any fire fight. Therefore you may find it useful to limit the supply of ammunition in ranged weapons and require characters to periodically reload or recharge them. If this does not sound interesting, ignore these rules and just let everyone fire freely.

Reloading a weapon or replacing a laser barrel takes one round. A weapon's description usually suggests the number of attacks a character can make with it before having to reload. Can you trust your players to be diligent and conscientious about marking off their ammo?

If you just shuddered with revulsion, use a system of bribery instead. Different methods of bribery produce different dramatic effects. Each time a player

announces he's spending a round reloading, award him a Perversity point or two. This encourages players to be honest or even more than honest.

Weapon malfunctions

A weapon malfunctions when you say it does. For guidance, Alpha Complex weapons are categorised as *standard*, *experimental* or *really experimental*.

Standard weapons include lasers, slugthrowers and grenades, as well as melee and primitive weapons. A standard weapon malfunctions if a player fires it and the attack roll is 20. If this was still good enough to hit the target, deal damage normally, then assess the malfunction.

Laser pistols have a higher chance of malfunctioning once they have fired more than six shots with the same barrel.

Experimental weapons include exotic or touchy things like cone rifles, semi-automatic slugthrowers, sonics, blasters, ice guns, flamethrowers, stun guns, plasma generators – basically all the really cool stuff. Experimental weapons malfunction if the attack roll is 19 or 20.

Anything issued to the Troubleshooters by R&D counts as *really experimental*. These devices malfunction whenever you want them to, probably dramatically, probably often.

The weapon description usually suggests a characteristic and entertaining malfunction.

Weapons in Alpha Complex are deadly – to their users as well as their targets. You know how everyone says the work ethic is not what it used to be? Well, in Alpha Complex they do not even have a work ethic. The few citizens who work in Alpha Complex's automated factories turning out mass-produced weapons are more concerned with filling their quotas than with quality. As a result, even the most reliable weapons malfunction with alarming frequency.

If you like, you can use the optional malfunction rules to determine when a weapon malfunctions. Or you can be insouciantly cavalier and have weapons

V1V and like that

'What's with the plasma generator doing V1V damage? Its minimum damage is vaporised and its maximum damage is Vaporised – do I care about the margin?'

These statistics mean, 'Jeez, this weapon is *really seriously deadly*.' We add the Boost and Maximum statistics partly to make these weapons fit with the others and partly to guarantee their deadliness even against potent defences.

Apply the target's defences normally, reducing the attack's damage below Vaporised. Then use the attack roll's success margin to add extra damage steps. With a Boost of 1, there will probably be lots of extra steps, boosting the damage right back up to Vaporised. The deadliness of the weapon is preserved.

malfunction whenever you like – when things are moving too slowly, for example, or when a weapon's failure will add to the atmosphere of **PARANOIA** combat.

Each weapon malfunctions in its own charming fashion. Moreover, you may want to grant the weapon's user one chance to try remedying the malfunction before it proves deadly – by making a Violence skill roll or a roll against the relevant Violence specialty. The following descriptions say how weapons malfunction and what happens when a user tries to 'remedy' the problem.

Blaster and energy pistol

The principles by which the blaster and energy pistol work are so secret, virtually no one knows them. (Translation: We couldn't think of anything.) The blaster is a bulky one-hand weapon with flashy fins, styled like a Corvette. The energy pistol is much smaller and ends in an antenna surrounded by rings.

Malfunction: Roll the die. On an even roll, the weapon stops working. On an odd roll, it heats up suddenly and then vaporises. In the latter case, the holder suffers damage as if attacked.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll prevents vaporisation but the weapon is useless.

Brass knuckles

Like the name says, although brass is rare in Alpha Complex – these are more likely made of steel or aluminium. They do not malfunction particularly.

Club, knife, sword

You know these.

Malfunction: It breaks.

Remedy: None. Oh, you can take it home and fix it up with some superglue, we suppose.

Cone rifle and slugthrower

Cone rifles are neither cone-shaped nor rifles but a development of the modern bazooka. Slugthrowers are a development of the modern hand-gun, semi-automatic rifle and submachine-gun. Both can fire a variety of shells. Ammunition for both weapons is available in these forms:

- ☉ Solid slugs are titanium-jacket steel slugs that do impact damage.
- ☉ Dumdums are solid slugs designed to fly apart upon impact. Dumdum shells have lower range than solid slugs but do more damage.
- ☉ HE (high explosive) shells explode on contact. For slugthrowers, these are explosive bullets, which do more damage than solid shells or dumdums; for cone rifles, these are explosive shells with a 5-metre radius.
- ☉ AP (armour piercing) shells are designed to penetrate armour. For slugthrowers, these are 'greased' bullets designed to penetrate Kevlar or other body armour. For cone rifles, these are explosive shells designed to penetrate tank or flybot armour.
- ☉ HEAT (high explosive antitank) shells are similar to AP shells but are somewhat more effective (and costly).
- ☉ Napalm shells explode on contact, spreading jellied petroleum or white phosphorus over the skin of the target (or, in the case of cone rifle shells, over the surrounding area). Napalm continues to burn for some rounds after contact (roll 1d20 to determine how many), doing damage to the target each round. Because both jellied petroleum and white phosphorus contain their own supply of oxygen, napalm cannot

be extinguished with water or by suffocation but can only be removed by scraping the stuff off the skin.

- ☉ Flare shells illuminate rather than cause injury. Flare shells fired by slugthrowers are tracer bullets – they produce streaks of light that briefly light the area. Flare shells fired by cone rifles light the area and continue to burn for several rounds after launch (roll 1d20 and divide by 2 to determine how many).
- ☉ ECM (electronic countermeasures) shells contain electronic jamming equipment. ECM damages bot targets and jams mobile phones, radio, radar and other devices that rely on the broadcast or reception of electromagnetic signals. Organic targets are unaffected. Most of The Computer's hardware is heavily shielded and immune to standard ECM.
- ☉ Tacnuke shells are available only for cone rifles. These small nuclear devices can vaporise large parts of a sector.
- ☉ Gas shells spread a cloud of gas over the radius indicated on the Weapons Chart. The effect depends on the specific gas used:

Poison gas does S3K Bio damage to any living being within the gas radius. You can roll damage separately for each target, or just roll 1d20 once and deal the same damage (reduced by airtight armour) to all targets.

Smoke reduces visibility and scatters laser fire. A character firing at a target through smoke cannot spend Perversity points to improve his success roll. In addition, treat the smoke as E1 armour against laser fire through it.

Corrosion gas damages all metallic targets (i.e. bots) within the area of the gas. Treat as poison gas but it affects only inorganic and not organic beings. It also reduces the damage protection abilities of metal armour (e.g. plate); reduce the armour rating by 1 for each round the armour is exposed to the gas.

Vomit gas causes organic beings to vomit. Each round, each target must make a Violence skill roll. If he fails, he begins to vomit and may take no other action for several Combat Rounds. To

determine the number of rounds, roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled by 4, rounding up.

Gauss gas dramatically increases the permeability of free space within the area of the gas cloud. If a gauss or energy weapon is fired into the area of the cloud and hits its target, boost its damage by one step.

Dirt gas rapidly adheres to any solid substance, coating it with a black slime. Apart from being disgusting, this removes reflect armour's damage protection. Reflect regains its protective value if the wearer gets a chance to clean his armour. This takes two rounds and a plentiful supply of water or other solvent.

Hallucinogenic gas contains a potent hallucinogenic drug. Each Combat Round a human remains in the gas cloud, he must make a Violence roll; if he fails, the hallucinogen begins to take effect. All success numbers are halved for the next day because the human cannot be sure whether anything is real or imaginary.

Note: Non-organic beings (that is, bots) are not affected by poison, vomit or hallucinogenic gas. Characters wearing gas masks are similarly immune to these gases, as are characters in environment and combat suits.

Cone rifle fuses

All slugthrower ammo uses contact fuses, meaning it explodes on impact. Cone rifle shells usually have contact fuses but other types of fuses are also available. Any type of cone rifle shell can have any type of fuse. The fuse types:

- ☉ **Heat fuses** activate a shell when it gets hot. How hot is hot? That varies by shell – 300 degrees Celsius, 100 degrees, body heat or only in the midst of a thermonuclear explosion. A character requisitioning a shell with a heat trigger specifies the heat level he wants and then prays PLC does not screw up.
- ☉ **Gauss fuses** activate when subject to violent electromagnetic flux. This flux can be caused by gauss or energy weapons, powerful radio signals, lightning and so on.
- ☉ **Remote fuses** activate upon reception of a coded radio signal, usually from a Com unit modified



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to transmit the appropriate code. The user fires the shell, lets it fall and waits. When he wants to activate the shell, he transmits the code. If the remote fuse is in an area blanketed by ECM jamming, it will not activate.

- **Timers** activate a certain amount of time after being fired. How much time? As with heat fuses, this varies, from nanoseconds to geological epochs. Again, a character can try to specify when he requisitions a timer. Timers set by hand prior to being fired are also available but are rarer than preset timers.

Malfunction: The slugthrower or cone rifle jams. If the weapon was firing any shell other than solid slug or dumdums, the shell explodes in the weapon's chamber, destroying it and doing damage as an attack. The shell also has whatever effect such shells normally have (e.g. flare shells emit light).

Remedy: A successful specialty roll clears the jam. If the shell fired was solid slug or dumdum, this returns the weapon to normal function. Otherwise, the weapon is a total loss.

Flamethrower

This is your classic action-movie flamethrower. It is a pretty devastating weapon; on the other hand, it is of limited use in enclosed spaces (like, oops, most of Alpha Complex) because the stream tends to bounce back when it hits an obstruction. Also, they do have a nasty history of explosion and the user is strapped into the weapon – hard to run when things go bad.

Malfunction: It explodes. Treat as an attack on everyone within 5 metres.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll prevents the explosion but the weapon is useless.

Force Sword

This weapon is a monofilament fibre encased in a force field sheath. It can cut through just about anything short of neutronium.

Malfunction: The force field ceases to exist and the monofilament becomes a loose wire which may whip around and injure its user. In this case, the user makes a skill roll; if he succeeds, he avoids

injury. If he fails, he rolls for damage as a target.

Remedy: Nothing can prevent the malfunction. A successful weapon roll returns the weapon to normal function.

Gauss gun

Gauss guns project a violent electromagnetic flux that wreaks havoc on bots and electronic equipment. Organic beings do not suffer damage from gauss guns. Most of The Computer's hardware is heavily shielded and does not usually suffer damage from standard gauss attacks.

Malfunction: If the weapon malfunctions, it stops working – no other ill effects.

Remedy: A successful Electronic Engineering specialty roll fixes the weapon. What, you do not have that specialty? Ooh, bad luck.

Grenade

If someone throws a grenade but misses his success roll, the grenade hits somewhere other than the target. What better time for an Arbitrary Justice roll?

Malfunction: The grenade is a dud and fails to explode.

Remedy: No remedy is possible.

Hand flamer

Sort of a mini-flamethrower; the hand flamer fires a thin jet of flaming oily liquid at high velocity.

Malfunction: It may explode. Roll the die; if the roll is even, the weapon stops working. If the roll is odd, the weapon explodes; roll damage for its wielder as if attacked.

Remedy: Nothing can stop the weapon from exploding. If the weapon stops working, a successful specialty roll returns it to normal function.

Ice gun

The ice gun operates by freezing water and rapid-firing needles of ice. You reload it by pouring water into a nozzle at the top of the weapon.

Malfunction: The freezing chamber jams and over-freezes. Roll the die; if the number rolled is even, the weapon is inoperative. If odd, the gun shatters, spraying the wielder with shards of ice. Treat this as an attack on the wielder.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll prevents the ice gun from shattering but the weapon cannot be repaired.

Laser

You can unlatch a laser weapon's barrel and remove it from the main body of the gun, then replace it with another barrel. Replacing a barrel takes one Combat Round, during which the user can take no other aggressive action. You can fire each barrel up to six times with reasonable safety. If you fire more than six times, there is an increasing chance of malfunction each time. (If using the malfunction rules, the malfunction number decreases by 1 each time, so on the seventh shot, the weapon malfunctions on a skill roll of 19 or 20; on the eighth, on a roll of 18, 19 or 20; and so on.)

Each laser barrel shoots a beam of only one colour of the Security Clearance spectrum. The main body of a laser weapon can mount a barrel of any colour but possessing a barrel that shoots a beam of higher Clearance than your own is treason. It is possible to paint a laser barrel to look like a different Clearance. Reflec armour is designed to reflect all laser fire of its wearer's colour and below.

Each laser barrel has six rings around the snout, each the same colour as the barrel's beam. Each time you fire the weapon, one of the rings goes black. A glance at the weapon reveals how many shots remain and the barrel's colour.

Malfunction: If a laser pistol or rifle malfunctions, it emits a high-pitched beeping sound. It explodes within a few Combat Rounds. To determine how many rounds, roll the die and divide the number rolled by 4, rounding up. The explosion is an area-effect Impact attack (S2K) on each character within 3 metres of the weapon.

Remedy: A successful Energy Weapons roll prevents the explosion but the barrel is unusable thereafter.

Needle gun

Needle guns look much like modern automatic hand guns but appear to be made of plastic. When you press a button on the handle, a door opens to reveal a roll of tiny plastic flechettes mounted on a spool. You reload the weapon by removing and replacing the spool (much like replacing a film or printer cartridge).

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When fired, the weapon separates the flechettes and fires them in a steady stream.

Malfunction: The plastic ammunition jams in the pressure chamber and the weapon may explode. Roll the die. On an even roll, the weapon is unusable. On an odd roll, it explodes. In this case, roll for all targets within 1 metre as though they were attacked.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll clears the jam and prevents an explosion but the weapon malfunction number decreases by 1 (cumulative) each time it is fired thereafter.

Neurowhip

A nasty whip-shaped weapon that delivers a stinging jolt to the nervous system.

Malfunction: Lashes back and hits its wielder; roll damage for him as for a target.

Remedy: None (the weapon did not break; the user just screwed up).

Plasma generator

A plasma generator consists of a tank backpack holding plasma (superheated gas) in a magnetic bottle, a magnetically-sealed hose from the backpack to a hand projector and a shield that protects the wielder from the hand projector. When fired, a ball of plasma erupts from the hand projector and travels forward, expanding as it moves. Each Combat Round, the ball moves 5 metres forward, though its movement may be affected by wind. It expands outward in a 60-degree cone in front of the wielder, doing damage to anything in that cone as it moves. It continues moving for 4 rounds and then dissipates.

Note: If a player fires the ball into the wind, the wind may blow it back into his face.

Plasma generators are much more powerful than flamethrowers – indeed, they are one of the deadliest weapons in **PARANOIA**. Unfortunately, like flamethrowers, the wielder is strapped in and the weapon malfunctions frequently.

Malfunction: A warning alarm buzzes. After several Combat Rounds (how many? Roll the die and halve the number rolled), the weapon explodes. Treat this as an attack on all targets within 10 metres.

Remedy: This is a tough one. The weapon is very expensive and The Computer will be displeased if it is damaged. On the other hand, a character may understandably prefer to run. A successful specialty roll turns off the buzzer. A second successful roll prevents the weapon from exploding. A third successful roll would repair the weapon and return it to normal function – good luck.

By the way: If anything damages the magnetic containment bottle, the plasma generator is not long for this world.

Sonic pistol and rifle

Sonic pistols and rifles are experimental weapons that project a cone of deadly ultrasonic vibrations.

Malfunction: The weapon shakes itself to pieces, doing damage to its wielder as though it hit him in an attack.

Remedy: No remedy is possible.

Stungun

Stunguns do no damage. Instead, any living target is stunned for three Combat Rounds. During this time, the target is weak and disoriented and may not take aggressive action but may stagger away, try to punch a phone number, gasp a warning and so on. A stunned target's

perceptions may be distorted.

Malfunction: All beings within 5 metres are Snafued (roll as above to determine the number of rounds).

Remedy: A successful specialty roll repairs the weapon. If a character attempts to repair the weapon and fails, he is knocked unconscious and the weapon is permanently Busted.

Tangler

A tangler throws a four-metre adhesive rope that wraps itself around the target and gradually contracts. It does no damage but when a target is hit, choose a body location to which the tangler rope adheres. If you choose the head, the rope has wrapped around the target's neck and the target will die of strangulation in several rounds (roll the die to determine how many) unless the rope is removed. The victim needs the aid of another to remove it but this takes only one round. If any other body location is hit, that area is immobilised and the target loses its use. Again, he may remove the rope in one round with the aid of another.

Malfunction: The tangler stops working.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll fixes it. An unsuccessful roll means all the adhesive ropes burst out and stick to the character attempting the repair.

Truncheon

A heavy club or cudgel about as long as your arm. The favoured crowd control weapon of Internal Security **GREEN** goons.

Malfunction: It breaks.

Remedy: Fine the citizen whose skull so inconsiderately broke your truncheon.

Unarmed

Bare fists and booted feet never malfunction, so the safest course is to choose them over a plasma generator every time, right?

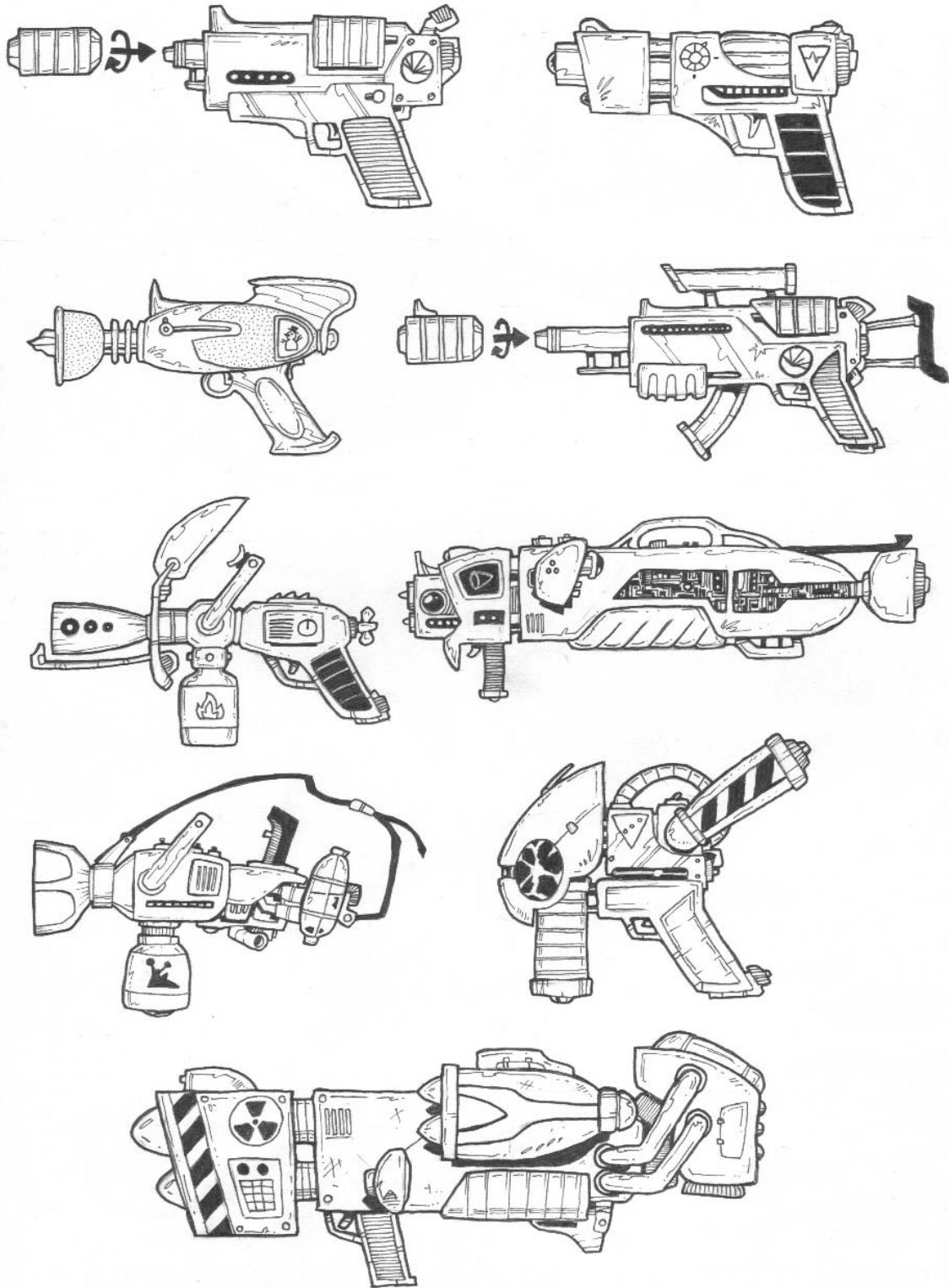


TROUBLESHOOTERS

Weapon chart

Weapon	Wpn type	Dmg type	Min-Boost- Max	Shots	Range	Cost	Clearance	Notes
Blaster	Energy	Energy	M3K	1	50	500	O	
Brass knuckles	Hand	Impact	S5W	—	—	10	R	
Cone rifle**	Projectile	—	—	1	200	1,000	B	
Cone rifle shells**								
solid slug		Impact	W3K	1	200	100	B	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	1	200	150	B	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3k	1	160	120	B	
HE		Impact	W2K	1	200	200	I	area 40m
HEAT		Impact	W2K	1	200	400	I	AP, area 40m
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	200	300	B	area 8m, spray
flare		—	—	1	200	100	B	bright light
ECM		Energy	J2J	1	200	400	I	only vs. bots
gas		Bio	varies	1	200	250	B	area 30m; see note 1
tacnuke**		Energy	V1V	1	200	150,000	V	area 160m; see note 2
Cone rifle		—	—	1	—	100	B	each shell requires one
triggers**								trigger
Energy pistol	Energy	Energy	W3K	5	60	200	Y	
Flamethrower	Field	Energy	S3K	10	20	500	Y	area 20m, spray
Force sword	Hand	Energy	S3K	—	—	400	B	
Gauss gun	Field	Energy	W3K	100	20	500	I	20m cone; only vs. bots
Grenade	Thrown	Impact	W3K	1	20	50	R	area 5m
Hand flamer	Field	Energy	S3K	3	40	1,000	V	easily concealed
Ice gun	Projectile	Impact	S3K	25	50	500	G	spray
Knife	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	20	R	thrown range 20m
Laser pistol	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	50	25	*	needs body
(barrel)								
Laser pistol (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	75	R	needs barrel
Laser rifle (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	100	50	*	needs body
Laser rifle (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	250	O	needs barrel
Needle gun	Projectile	Impact	S3W	10	60	750	B	AP
Neurowhip	Hand	Energy	S5M	—	—	300	G	
Plasma	Field	Energy	V1V	10	—	2,000	V	area 20m (60-degree
generator**								cone)
Rock or debris	Thrown	Impact	O5W	1	20	—	any	
Rock or debris, big	Thrown	Impact	O4W	1	10	—	any	
Slugthrower	Projectile	—	—	—	—	450	Y	
solid slug		Impact	W3K	6	50	50	Y	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	3	50	75	G	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	6	40	60	Y	
HE		Impact	W2K	6	40	75	Y	
HEAT		Impact	W2K	6	40	100	G	AP
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	40	75	Y	area 3m
flare		—	—	1	40	40	Y	bright light
ECM		Energy	H2J	1	40	200	I	only vs. bots
gas		—	varies	1	40	75	Y	area 5m; see note 1
Slugthrower, semi-	Projectile	—	—	—	—	750	G	spray (see note 3)
automatic								
Sonic pistol	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	60	150	O	see note 4
Sonic rifle	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	100	300	O	see note 4 again
Stun gun	Field	—	Stun	6	40	250	O	see note 5
Sword	Hand	Impact	W5K	—	—	20	any	
Tangler	Field	—	—	3	50	250	G	see note 6
Truncheon	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	10	R	
Unarmed combat	Unarmed	Impact	O5K	—	—	—	any	
Used weapon	10-25% off market value; reliability varies (heh, heh!)							
Reloads/ recharges	10% of the base weapon cost, unless otherwise specified. Lasers are recharged by buying a new barrel.							

24. EQUIPMENT



'What is this 'overkill' you speak of, citizen?'



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Note 1: Gas effects are listed on page 97, under 'Cone rifle and slugthrower.'

Note 2: Roll damage from a tactical nuclear weapon only in extraordinary circumstances. Otherwise, assume mass vaporisation.

Note 3: Semi-automatic slugthrowers fire slugthrower ammo at a higher rate. Solid, solid AP, dum-dum, HE and HEAT ammo can be sprayed. The other ammo types are one-shot and hence cannot be sprayed (duh).

Note 4: A 'Wounded' result means the target is deafened for one scene (not physically wounded) and stunned (see note 5) for one round.

Note 5: This weapon stuns the target. A stunned target cannot perceive or do anything in the next round.

Note 6: This weapon entangles the target. An entangled target cannot move and is Snafued until end of next round. Target can move when Snafu ends.

**The laser's colour is its Clearance.

** Unauthorised possession of an item marked with a double asterisk (**) is treason. Possessing an unauthorised tacnuke is *big-time serious* treason.

Armour

Armour protects the wearer against one or more type(s) of damage. Armour has a number rating – the higher the number, the better the armour's protection against the specified damage type. The type is indicated by a letter code before the armour's rating (for example, B3 means the armour has rating 3 versus Bio attacks).

Some armour protects against more than one damage type. Such multiple-type armour has ratings separated by slashes (for example, E4/I3).

If the armour has no letter code, it protects against all damage.

Damage: Armour may reduce damage up to a number of steps equal to the armour rating. For instance, if an attack deals 3 steps of damage, armour rating 2 reduces the damage to 1 step. So an attack that would reduce an unarmoured character to Down instead reduces a character with

armour rating 2 merely to Wounded. If the armour does not protect against that type of attack, do not adjust the damage.

Against explosions or very powerful area attacks like plasma generators or tacnukes, it is often silly to apply armour. If a plasma generator ends up producing light sunburn, your players will privately snicker at you and this cannot be tolerated. Use judgement.

If armour reduces the damage below 1 step, the attack does no damage. It still hits, and may muss the target's hair or singe his overalls or anger him, but it does too little damage to affect the course of the fight.

Coverage: Most Troubleshooters wear *reflec* armour in the form of overalls. Technically this armour leaves the head and arms exposed. However, hit location is only important when you decide it is. **PARANOIA** usually plays more smoothly when you do not penalize the players for this spotty coverage. Assume the armour provides protection whenever the wearer is hit, unless you have a dramatic or amusing reason to do otherwise.

Full-figure armour not only encases the body completely, it is airtight. Armour is only full-figure if noted in the description. Regular armour is not airtight.

Hardened and ablative armour: Armour can be *hardened*. Against hardened armour, treat armour-piercing attacks as normal attacks.

Ablative armour wears away gradually or abruptly by taking damage. At the end of each round in which the armour reduces damage to the wearer, reduce the armour's rating by 1 unless otherwise noted. When the armour's rating reaches 0, it becomes useless. (The armour's description may list another way to reduce the rating.)

ArmourAll

ArmourAll is a budget version of the more powerful Battle Armour. It consists of a powered exoskeleton covered with ferroplastic plating. The suit can be worn without the exoskeleton but it is really heavy and hard to move.

Asbestos Clothing

A stylish overall made of totally non-toxic asbestos.

Battle Armour

The cutting edge of Alpha Complex protective technology, Battle Armour is a suit of powered combat armour capable of withstanding direct hits from cone rifles and heavy lasers. The suit vastly increases the wearer's strength and speed, enabling him to smash through Commie forces with ease.

Unfortunately, Battle Armour has a slight battery issue and the internal power-pack tends to run down rather quickly in combat. For deployment within Alpha Complex, Power Services normally issue a very long extension cord along with the armour.

Combat Suit

This looks and feels like shiny plastic but is harder than steel. It includes a gas mask and helmet. The Combat Suit is made out of memory plastic and reforms when damaged or dented. Note that damaged suits tend to reset to their default size, which can squish oversized or overweight wearers.

Environment Suit

Protects only against gas, poison and other toxic environments. Radiation? What's your Security Clearance? **RED?** Oh, in that case it protects you from radiation. Really, it does. Off you go.

Kevlar

You can wear Kevlar armour under *reflec* and most Troubleshooters who can get their hands on the stuff do.

Reflec

Troubleshooters usually wear overalls made of a special anti-laser armour called *reflec*. It feels like foil-covered denim. Lightweight, flexible, durable, colourful, mostly stainproof – really, *reflec* is wonderful stuff, aside from its dismally limited ability to protect the wearer.

Reflec is technically E1 armour but for 'E' read 'L' (laser). *Reflec* armour protects against laser attacks only, not other energy attacks – not fire, not sonics, not anything else. Lasers. *Just* lasers.

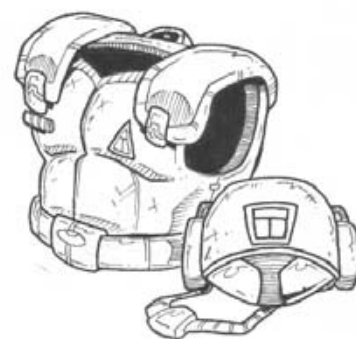
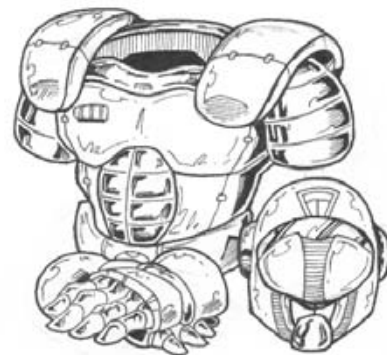
24. EQUIPMENT

Worse, reflec is issued in the colour of the wearer's Security Clearance. The reflec protects only against laser bolts coloured that Clearance and lower. Against higher Clearance laser colours the reflec is useless.

(Yes, we know all about the electromagnetic spectrum and the laws of colour addition. If you shoot a real laser of, say, a green wavelength of light at a target that reflects blue light, the target will not reflect the green laser. In the first edition of **PARANOIA** we had a whole complex set of rules for multichroma armour and stuff to try to make our lasers conform to the laws of nature. But then we decided, what the hell? This is how we *want* lasers and reflec armour to work, so this is how they actually *do* work in **PARANOIA**. So there.)

Coms

Troubleshooters on a mission must remain in communication with The Computer at all times. Failure to do so is insubordination. Each character has a PDC as personal equipment. It works in all inhabited areas of Alpha Complex. On missions to abandoned or devastated sectors or Outdoors, The



'Of course Reflec is all a Troubleshooter needs.'

Armour chart

	Type and protection	Cost (credits)	Clearance	Notes
ArmourAll**	4	2,500	B	hardened; full-figure
Asbestos clothing	E3	100	any	ablative
Battle armour**	6	100,000	I	hardened; full-figure
Combat suit**	5	10,000	B	hardened
Environment suit	—	1,000	G	see note 7; full-figure
Farraday suit	—	5,000	G	see note 8; full-figure
Kevlar	I2	800	O	
Reflec, legal	E1	500	*	see note 9
Illegal	E2	1,000	—	
Incredibly illegal	E3	3,000	—	

Note 7: Armour protects against hazardous environments (gas, poison).

Note 8: Protects against radiation and strong magnetic fields.

Note 9: Reflec protects only against laser attacks (not other energy attacks, just lasers) of its colour or lower. The reflec's colour is its Clearance. Illegal IR-market reflec may – *may* – offer greater protection.

** Unauthorised possession of an item marked with a double asterisk (**) is treason.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

The PDC

Through the wonders of wireless networking and mobile digital technology, The Computer has been able to bring many new services to the happy citizens of Alpha Complex, increasing their happiness above what had already been a near-maximal state.

As an example, among every Troubleshooter's most prized equipment is, invariably, a Series 1300 Personal Digital Companion (PDC), a helpful, friendly AI contained within a small plastic case, bearing a small colour display screen and a standard telephony keypad.

The Series 1300 device is indeed truly a personal digital companion; through the miracle of voice-profiling technology, a Series 1300 device will respond only to the voice of its designated user. Thus a traitorous troubleshooter cannot gain access to the PDC of a loyal troubleshooter, except maybe by forcing him to speak to the PDC at laserpoint.

In this regard the Series 1300 device is vastly superior to the now-deprecated Series 1200, which required the user to provide a thumbprint to unlock the device. Since the introduction of the Series 1300, the incidence of Troubleshooter casualties missing thumbs has declined a seasonally-adjusted 68%.

The Series 1300 PDC is truly a multipurpose device with many useful features. Among them:

Calendar

Troubleshooter Ron-R-GUY-1: PDC!

PDC: Yes, citizen user?

Troubleshooter: What is my schedule for today, PDC?

PDC: Loading... 0900 to 0945, interrogation by Internal Security. 0945 to 1000, mandatory Bouncy Bubble Beverage break. 1000 to 1200, show trial, televised live on *What's My Treason?*. 1200 to—

Troubleshooter: Wait! That's not my schedule. There must be some mistake.

Loudspeaker: Citizen Ron-R-GUY-1. Please report to Internal Security for immediate interrogation.

Address Book

Troubleshooter: PDC!

PDC: Yes, Citizen user?

Troubleshooter: Please add citizen Rachel-R-BLT-2 to my address book.

PDC: Accessing. I'm sorry, citizen user. There is no such citizen.

Troubleshooter: Huh? I left her in cubicle ZXY-12 in BLT sector just 10 minutes ago!

PDC: Accessing. Cubicle ZXY-12 is currently undergoing cleaning and renovation by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and Mind Control prior to new occupancy.

Troubleshooter: But... Please access cloning records for Rachel-R-BLT.

PDC: Accessing. There is no citizen Rachel-R-BLT. There has never been a citizen Rachel-R-BLT.

Troubleshooter: But...

PDC: You are mistaken.

Troubleshooter: But...

PDC: You seem distraught and possibly delusional, citizen. Please be calm and remain in the area. Assistance is on the way.

Camera

The PDC can take an infinite number of high-resolution colour photos with the built-in camera. 'Infinite,' because they are stored locally only for milliseconds, after which they are sent over the air to Internal Security, where they are stored for your convenience, then scanned and auto-interpreted for evidence of treason. Later, they can be printed, using the printer in any standard confession booth, in lush colour, on high-quality photo-reproduction paper, to serve as evidence at your trial.

24. EQUIPMENT

Phone

And, of course, the PDC can be used as a mobile phone:

[Sound of ring tone based on the recent hit tune 'I'm So Glad to Be Sedated.']

'User Desmond-O-NTY-3 is not available. This call has been forwarded to an automated voice system. Please listen carefully, as our menu options have changed. To confess to treason, please press 1. To accuse the citizen you are calling of treason, please press 2. To accuse a different citizen of treason, please press 3. To leave voice mail, please press 4. To send a numeric page, please press 5. For more options, please press 6.'

[Sound of 3 being pressed.]

'Thank you. Using the keypad, please enter the letters and digits corresponding to the name of the person you wish to accuse of treason.'

[Miscellaneous bleeps and bleeps.]

'No such person. Main menu. To confess to treason, please press 1. To accuse the citizen you are—'

[Irritable press of 6.]

'More options. If not using a touch-tone phone, please press 1. If not sure whether you are using a touch-tone phone, please press 2. For your loan balance, please press 3. To answer the survey on the new Bouncy Bubble Beverage, please press 4. For global thermonuclear war, please press 5. If you know the number of the extension you are trying to reach, press octothorpe and star simultaneously, then 3 several times quickly and follow the voice instructions. For more options, please press eleventeen. Eleventeen. For more options. Options. General protection fault. This device will self-destruct in 10 seconds. Counting. Nine. Eight...'

Ah, yes, the **self-destruct mechanism** – a handy little feature. As a last resort, a Troubleshooter can always set his Series 1300 PDC to self-destruct and use it as a grenade. The popularity of this feature is attested to by the fact that Troubleshooters who discharged their PDC prior to death at the hands of traitorous enemies is up a seasonally-adjusted 68% in this quarter alone.



'You have selected CONFESSION. Please select the crime you wish to CONFESS.'



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Computer issues a variety of portable communication devices, or Coms. On such expeditions each Troubleshooter must carry a basic Com and the team may also have a vehicle with a more powerful Com to relay their messages over longer ranges.

Coms carried by characters transmit continually, so The Computer can monitor what goes on. Com units can be turned off but a character who wishes to turn off his Com must first obtain permission from The Computer. If it is turned off without proper authorisation, he earns fines. (Rumours that some Com units explode violently if turned off without prior Computer authorisation are treason.)

A few typical Com units:

Field telephones: Two or more phones, a power source and lengths of connecting wire strung on the ground or buried beneath the surface. Messages can be transmitted without breaking radio silence but mobility is restricted and the wire is easily cut. Gauss weapons and ECM devices disrupt unshielded field telephones within 500m. In hazardous environments The Computer issues shielded field telephones, which are immune to most gauss and ECM effects.

Com 1: These walkie-talkies broadcast on five channels and have a range of about 10 kilometres. A more powerful Com can relay the signal of a Com 1 over a longer effective range. Inside Alpha Complex, signals may be blocked by walls, doors, ceilings and so on.

Com 2: These unabridged dictionary-sized units are tuneable to broadcast or receive on any radio frequency and can scan the spectrum for broadcasts. Com 2s have a range of 100km at short wavelengths and reach to the horizon at longer wavelengths. In Alpha Complex, signals may be shielded by heavy metal objects.

Com 3: These are even more powerful and have a virtually unlimited range. At shorter wavelengths they can blanket the Earth; longer wavelengths reach to the horizon or line of sight. They are not portable and are usually installed in vehicles such as flybots and crawlers. They are rarely used inside Alpha

Complex, as their signals disrupt regular communications.

Com 4: These ultimate communicators can broadcast simultaneously on up to 100 different wavelengths. Their input jacks permit connection to various telemetry devices. For example, if connected to an electronic thermometer, the unit would broadcast the current temperature on a user-selected wavelength. These units are most often installed in unmanned probes or in sophisticated bots. Their transmission rate is extremely high, the equivalent of modern-day space probes.

Multicorders

Multicorders are all-purpose detection devices fitted with various sensors. They run multicorder programs in the form of holographic chips, each about the size of a thumbnail. Programs permit the multicorders to process and display sensor data in various useful ways. There are four models of multicorders, increasing in sophistication as the model number rises. Some programs run only on the more sophisticated models.

Multicorder 1: This portable device is often carried on missions into abandoned sectors or as backup on other missions. Only one program may operate at any one time.

Multicorder 2: This is available as a rather bulky portable model and is often installed in vehicles. It can run three programs at one time.

Multicorder 3: This is only installed in vehicles or large bots. It can run up to five programs at once.

Multicorder 4: This powerful multicorder is only installed in vehicles or large bots. It runs any number of programs simultaneously but more than 10 concurrent programs degrades system performance.

Multicorder programs

Programs designated with an asterisk (*) after the name run only on models 3 and 4. Other programs are available for all models unless noted.

Bot damage analysis: Runs a series of tests designed for each specific type and model of bot to determine nature and extent of any damage or malfunction. Note: Does not indicate alterations in software or Frankenstein's (rogue bots).

Dead reckoning (GPS): Stores and displays a variety of maps or accesses map libraries via radio. When the program is running, the operator must input current position; thereafter, the unit will display the map on request with current position, route and identified features on the map. (The term 'global positioning system' does not exist in Alpha Complex, although the abbreviation 'GPS' does. What does it stand for? What is your Security Clearance, citizen?)

Disease analysis: Analyses tissue and blood samples for foreign bacteria, viruses and so on, as well as chemical imbalances, genetic disorders and so forth.

Editing: The Communications Officer can use the multicorder to revise and arrange the mission's video recordings into an aesthetically pleasing whole. Altering records to distort or falsify the truth is, of course, treasonous.

Infrared: Displays a variety of processed infrared images in various degrees of magnification with overlays interpreting temperature levels. Hot areas appear brighter than cool areas. Animals and humans appear lighter than the surrounding terrain, while a jet's contrail would be distinctly brighter. The effective range varies with the model number. Model 1: 100m; Model 2: 1km; Models 3-4: 10km.

Lie detector: The multicorder is connected to electrodes which are attached to the subject. The multicorder then interprets the subject's spoken and biochemical responses to a series of questions, indicating which of the subject's statements are true, false or ambiguous. The test is only partly reliable. (When a character attempts to lie while hooked up to a lie detector, roll against his Management skill.)

Life form recognition*: Compares visual, x-ray, infrared and other data with library references to identify plant or animal forms. Outdoors. Provides a concise summary of significant facts about the life form and permits remote radio access to more complete reference libraries. Programs are available for various different ecological provinces; life forms not native to that area will probably not be identified properly.

Psionic phenomena*: *Experimental.* Detects and graphically displays psionic (mutant) activity in the environment. Presence of psionic activity is detected with some reliability but indication of direction and range is extremely unreliable. Range is tentative and varies with model number: Model 3: 0-100m?; Model 4: 0-1,000m?

Radar: Displays a variety of processed radar images in various scales. The effective range of the radar varies with multicorder number: Model 1: 1km; Model 2: 10km; Model 3: 100km; Model 4: 1,000km. (The maximum range is never greater than line of sight.)

Radio/radar: Displays a variety of processed images indicating the location of radio/radar emissions in the vicinity. Also serves as a radio receiver. Effective range varies with the model number: Model 1: 10km; Model 2: 100km; Model 3: 1,000km; Model 4: 5,000km.

Radioactivity: Displays graphic representations of radioactivity levels and types of radioactivity in the environment.

Recorder: May operate like a sound or video tape recorder and can also record data, images and interpretations from any other multicorder program. The recorder program is routinely loaded into the portable or vehicle-installed multicorder assigned to each Troubleshooter mission. The recorder program may thus provide a complete record of a party's activities. Often the multicorder simultaneously broadcasts the recorder data directly to The Computer to permit it to monitor the mission's progress. It is a treasonous act to prevent the multicorder from maintaining a complete record of a mission's activities.

Self-destruct: Loading this program into a multicorder causes the unit to wipe all currently loaded or recorded programs. The hardware is not damaged but new program chips will be required before the multicorder can be used again.

Toxin analysis: Identifies most common toxic substances. Samples are placed in a small lab unit connected to the multicorder. Rare or subtle toxins may not be identified.

Translate: Each program permits basic translations of one language into another. The more sophisticated the multicorder, the more refined and reliable the translation. All models translate spoken language; Model 4 permits limited translation of printed material in certain languages.

Visible light: Operates like a video camera, with a variety of enhancements like magnification, image recognition and filtering. This is the visual sensor element in most bots, permitting the bot to broadcast what he 'sees' directly to his brain, an operator, monitor or The Computer. Range is line of sight.

X-ray*: Unit works as a portable x-ray machine for medical purposes. Range: 3m.

Medication

The otherwise splendid description of **INFRARED** life in Alpha Complex presented in Chapter 77, 'Life in Alpha Complex,' omits certain details. What follows is more specific:

Rise with hundreds of others in the communal barracks. Take Wakey-Wakey pill. Wash. Eat breakfast in communal dining hall. Take nutritional supplements. Go to work in the food vats. Eat lunch in the communal dining hall. Take behaviour modifiers and motivational elevators. Work second shift in the food vats. Take mood depressives. Eat dinner in the communal dining hall. Take Truth Accelerator pill. Participate in social meetings and public hatings. Take Mood Elevator pill. Watch vidshow adventures in communal viewing lounge. Take Sleepy-Sleepy pill. Sleep.

The Computer generously provides all loyal citizens with a wide variety of drugs. Each drug has a Security Clearance; any citizen may request drugs of his own or lower Clearance. In addition, The Computer and docbots often prescribe higher Clearance drugs when they feel a citizen requires pharmaceutical treatment. A docbot 'prescribes' drugs by direct injection without warning.

Many Computer terminals and all confession booths have drug dispensing slots. These discharge 24-tablet bottles.

Q: Citizen, are you happy?

A: Yes, Friend Computer!

Q: Citizen, would you like some drugs?

A: Yes, Friend Computer!

Medical kits often contain six or more syringes of common drugs.

All drug bottles and syringes are clearly labelled with instructions and the name and quantity of the contents. For example, a bottle of Gelgernine tablets would have this label:

24 Gelgernine Tablets

INNER HAPPINESS

Take one (or more) when not happy.

Durations

How long a citizen is affected by a particular drug depends on a great many factors: citizen size and endurance, drug type, size, purity, delivery system, environment... In fact, there are just too many factors to keep track of. That means the drug lasts exactly as long as you want. The only important consideration for drug duration is the fun factor. As long as it's fun, then keep it going. If it will be more fun for it to wear off, then poof! it's gone.

Side effects, interactions and after effects

According to The Computer, traitors have placed toxins in certain drugs. It is the responsibility of each citizen to find these corrupted products and immediately report them to The Computer. The way you find corrupted drugs is by taking them. This also removes the toxic drug from circulation before it does any harm.

Taking two or more drugs simultaneously is a bad idea. That is because if something goes wrong it is lots harder to figure out which batch was tampered with. Also two or more drugs at the same time are often fatal. Remember! Dying before reporting defective drugs is treason!

Possible bad effects of corrupted drugs include organic damage, drug insanity and mutation. Another problem with drugs happens when citizens get used to taking them. These citizens are called addicts value added consumers. They tend to



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get a little strange when cut off from a steady supply. At first it's okay but after the first 10 minutes or so bad things start to happen.

Asperquaint

Common name: Tireless Servant of The Computer

Clearance: **YELLOW**

Availability: As prescribed by The Computer.

Effects: Subject will be wide awake, even after many hours without sleep. Produces a gung-ho, 'can-do' attitude. At high dosages, produces super enthusiasm – subject will ignore all but the most obvious dangers. Strength doubles.

Side-effects: Addicts develop a unique facial twitch. Capsule and syringe have a slight chance of producing shakes, weakness, memory loss or drug insanity.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day), injection (high dosage; a scene).

Benetridin

Common name: VideoLand

Clearance: **INDIGO**

Availability: Administered to Troubleshooters, Vulture Troopers and anyone else on 'routine' missions.

Effects: Produces the 'Teela O'Malley Syndrome'; subjects think no matter how outrageous the risk they cannot be harmed. Also acts as an anti-psionic; the subject cannot use any mutant powers and is invulnerable to most mental attacks for the duration of the drug.

Side-effects: Causes mild visual and audio fantasies. Injection frequently causes organic damage. Addicts have enormously dilated pupils and usually respond several seconds behind real-world events.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day), injection (one day, causes extremely vivid hallucinations).

Dynomorphin

Clearance: **ULTRAVIOLET**

Availability: Experimental.

Effects: Character feels no fear; he literally does not perceive anything as a threat. He will walk into a pit or shoot himself if ordered.

Side-effects: None.

After-effects: Organic damage.

Method of application: Injection.

Gelgernine

Common name: Inner Happiness

Clearance: **RED**

Availability: The Computer treats Gelgernine as a reward. Successful Troubleshooters get constant doses for weeks (or until addicted). Otherwise Gelgernine is available only through IR market channels.

Typical dispensing dialog

GM: You wake with a start and realise you've dozed off while The Computer was talking to you.

Troubleshooter: Do I remember anything about what it was saying?

GM: No. After a short wait, The Computer speaks! 'Citizen! Are you tired?'

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer! Due to mission requirements I have missed the last four sleep days. However, I am eager to accept any further assignments!

GM: Very good. Have a Perversity point, because that was really slick. The Computer speaks. 'Citizen, for missing bed check you will be fined 240 credits. Please render payment at the nearest Internal Security office. However, your devotion to The Computer has not gone unnoticed. To enable continued high levels of performance, a supply of stimulant will be provided.'

Troubleshooter: Thank you, friend Computer!

GM: A small bottle rolls down the chute and rattles to a halt in the dispensing tray. What are you doing?

Troubleshooter: I'll take the bottle.

GM: Okay, you're holding a small bottle.

Troubleshooter: What does it say?

GM: It says '24 Asperquaint Tablets, Take when tired. Death to The Computer and all Programmer Finks!'

Troubleshooter: *What?*

GM: Do you want to read it out loud?

Troubleshooter: NO! No, I'll just read it quietly, to myself.

GM: Quietly, trying not to move your lips, you read '24 Asperquaint Tablets, Take when tired. Death to The Computer and all Programmer Finks!' While you're examining the bottle, The Computer speaks. 'Citizen, failure to promptly carry out instructions is insubordination.'

Troubleshooter: I quickly open the bottle and take out a pill.

GM: The bottle opens easily. You find it difficult to get a pill out. When you finally do, you find that it's lumpy, crumbly and a strange blend of colours.

Troubleshooter: I'll examine it more closely.

GM: It seems to be poorly made. It's a swirl of green, pink and purple. It also smells like vat slime.

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer! I wish to report a case of Communist sabotage! This pill is defective!

GM: The Computer speaks! 'Citizen! Please report specifics of drug defect.'

Troubleshooter: *[weakly]* It's the wrong colour...

GM: The Computer speaks slowly and patiently. 'Citizen! Please report specific drug defects!'

Troubleshooter: What else do you want to know?

GM: The Computer, infinitely patient, speaks. 'Citizen! Please report effects from drug ingestion.'

Troubleshooter: But this pill is defective. It could kill me!

GM: The Computer, with righteous wrath, speaks! 'Citizen! Dying before reporting drug defects is treason!'

Effects: I'm so happy. I love living in Alpha Complex. I love The Computer. I'm happy to follow orders. I don't much care whether I live or die, I'm so happy. Hey, look, someone just shot my arm off! Isn't that wonderful?

Side-effects: Addiction, memory loss and paranoia. Regular users can be identified by a slight tremor and greenish foam about the mouth.

Methods of application: Tablet (lasts a scene), capsule (time-released to last a day), aerosol (white gas, used by Internal Security for messhall riots; fatalities minimal, less than 30%; lasts half a day).

Hydropsionic Acid

Common name: Mind Melt

Clearance: ULTRAVIOLET

Availability: Prohibited to all personnel.

Effects: Subject can use any mutant power he possesses without reduction in his Power attribute rating. In addition, subject may use mutant powers he cannot use normally. (Any time the character attempts to use a new random power, roll 1d20. If you roll 1 through 4, he can use the power.)

Side-effects: Stunned, weakness or pacifism.

After-effects: Power rating goes to 0 for a while.

Method of application: Capsule (a scene).

Pyroxidine

Common name: Wide Awake

Clearance: RED

Availability: Issued for 'routine' missions requiring high levels of Troubleshooter motivation and low levels of Troubleshooter self-preservation.

Effects: High awareness and alertness. Produces a gung-ho, 'can-do' attitude. Management ratings are doubled. At high dosages, the citizen ignores all but the most obvious dangers.

Side-effects: Frequent use (more than once in a lifetime) results in organic damage.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day), injection (a while, high dosage).

Pyroxidine 2

Common name: Wider Awake

Clearance: RED

Availability: Issued for 'routine' missions requiring high levels of Troubleshooter

motivation and low levels of Troubleshooter self-preservation. Often used as a morale booster by Happiness Officers.

Effects: High awareness and alertness, along with a general 'Gosh, I'm happy' attitude. Management specialties improve.

Side-effects: None at all. This drug is perfectly safe (as long as you keep taking it).

After-effects: Roll 1d20 and consult the 'Effects of Discontinuing Ingestion of Wider Awake' table.

Method of application: Tablet (one hour)

Effects of discontinuing ingestion of Wider Awake

01-07 None

08-15 Scalp itches

16-20 Claws at walls; screams 'Purple hairy spiders!'; dies

Qualine

Common name: E-Z-DUZ-IT

Clearance: RED

Availability: Standard issue to Happiness Officers.

Effects: 'You know, it's not so bad being trapped in this damaged reactor core. I suppose we'll all be dead in a few minutes.... Life is funny that way.'

Side-effects: Troubleshooter becomes oblivious to danger and is apt to follow any reasonable or semi-reasonable suggestion.

After-effects: None

Method of application: Comes in a one pint bottle. Usual dosage is a swig. Two swigs for citizens under exceptional stress (two hours).

Rolactin

Common name: Happy Life

Clearance: BLUE – and they mean it, this time. Anyone of lower Clearance caught with this will not be happy for long. Or alive.

Effects: Everything seems wonderful. Moxie and Chutzpah Management specialties are both increased by 4 for the duration of the effect. If you do not have that specialty, you gain them at 4 above your Management for the duration.

Side-effects: Causes a slight bluish tint to the skin. Otherwise none.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day).

Sandallathon

Common name: Sleepy-Sleepy

Clearance: RED

Availability: Mandatory prescription by The Computer or any of its minions. Used to enforce sleep days.

Effects: Zzzzzzz.

Side-effects: Addiction, shakes and anxiety attacks.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (half a day), injection (stunned for a scene; all pain blocked).

Telescopamine

Common name: IntSec calls it 'Truth and Beauty'; everyone else, 'Self-Finking Pills.'

Clearance: GREEN

Availability: Restricted to Internal Security.

Effects: Citizens under telescopamine will answer most questions reflexively (not necessarily truthfully) and will be agreeable to any reasonable voice. They will agree with the voice but they will not even be consciously aware of what is said. Used by Political Therapy Officers for interrogation and debriefing.

Side-effects: Temporary insanity.

Method of application: Injection (a while).

Thymoglandin

Common name: Combat Quick or Big T

Clearance: BLUE

Availability: Restricted. Available only to duly authorised mission personnel.

Effects: 'Kill! Kill! Charge! Where is the enemy?' Subject will feel the need for immediate, frenetic action. In combat situations, he will charge fearlessly but may have difficulty differentiating friend from foe. Outside combat he lifts burdens far heavier than he could normally lift, runs in circles and so on, anything to keep busy. In combat, character makes two attacks per round; Violence specialty ratings are doubled.

Side-effects: Roll both organic damage and drug insanity. Addicts have a wide-awake, slightly insane glare; the whites of their eyes turn a dark brown.

After-effects: Insanity for a while. Then they snap back to normal – except for a severe craving for more Thymoglandin.

Methods of application: Tablet (a scene), injection (half a day – followed



TROUBLESHOOTERS

by unconsciousness unless a new dose is administered immediately).

Visomorpain

Common name: Little Black Friend

Clearance: *INFRARED*

Availability: Mandatory and forever. Used by The Computer to keep workers happy and quiet.

Effects: Makes you happy and quiet.

Side-effects: Other than a perpetually stupid expression on addicts there are no side-effects. On the other hand, using Visomorpain with other drugs tends to cause severe psychosis, often of the demon-vision variety.

Methods of application: Tablet (a scene), injection (a while, eliminates all sensation of pain).

Xanitrack

Common name: Wakey-Wakey

Clearance: *INFRARED*

Availability: Mandatory on waking or in mid-shift.

Effects: Subjects feel hyper, speed up and spend the entire time with severe tremors.

Side-effects: Shakes, power loss, anxiety attacks, uncontrollable sneezing.

After-effects: Total exhaustion. This is cumulative. The more times Xanitrack is taken, the more tired the subject will become.

Method of application: Tablet (a scene).

Zybenzaphrene

Common name: Slumber-Soft

Clearance: *ORANGE*

Availability: Restricted to IntSec use.

Effects: Moxie and Chutzpah specialties are halved. Citizen is highly agreeable to suggestion. At high dosages, citizen wants to sleep very badly. If kept awake, he will agree to anything. Very useful for obtaining confessions, setting up patsies and so on.

Side-effects: Depression, sleepiness, reduced awareness.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day), injection (high dosage, one day).

Bots

'Bot,' a contraction of 'robot,' refers to any sapient non-organic mechanism capable of manipulating abstracts and making

intuitive leaps. In other words, they are machines that think.

Some loose thinkers use the term 'bot' to describe machines that are not truly intelligent. For instance, not all flybots are equipped with bot brains but the most sophisticated models are, so the term 'flybot' indiscriminately describes all models of the type.

Bots consist of a central processing unit (CPU) and peripherals. The CPU is the bot's brain, a highly sophisticated photonic processor in a matrix of artificial diamond. CPUs are generally enclosed in tough protective cartridges made of titanium and boron-nitride and plugged into the rest of the bot. CPUs are the most sophisticated and irreplaceable elements of any bot. The cartridges are easily portable, to permit recovery of the brain if the rest of the mechanism is damaged or destroyed.

Everything else – motivational appendages (feet), manipulatory appendages (hands), vocoders (mouths), video scanners (eyes) and so on – is a peripheral.

Bot brains are not necessarily interchangeable. One cannot remove a flybot brain and expect it to successfully operate a docbot, for example, because a flybot brain is programmed to fly a flybot, not to repair an injured human. However, The Computer or R&D frequently reconditions bot brains and reprograms them for other tasks. Reprogramming is not always completely successful. For example:

Troubleshooter PC: Docbot XRT-4-331. What is your primary function?

Docbot: To heal the injured and cure the sick.

PC: What functions have you served most recently?

Docbot: Inventory of weapon parts.

PC: What medical operations have you performed most recently?

Docbot: Grafting a gun stock to the damaged limb of a Troubleshooter.

This sort of thing is common. Anyone operating such a bot would have to be extremely explicit in his instructions to avoid the confusion of human medicine with weapon maintenance.

How bots think

All bots are programmed with the Five Laws of Robotics (Newly Revised), which basically say they must follow The Computer's orders above all else; human orders except when they conflict with The Computer's; and must try to preserve themselves from damage, except when orders have priority. Bots do not have Security Clearances; all bots are considered inferior to all humans. However, bots are frequently programmed to refuse instructions from any citizen below a certain Security Clearance.

The Five Laws are enforced by asimov circuits. Some bots' asimov circuits are faulty or have been removed; they may operate treasonously, i.e. disobey Computer or human orders. These bots are said to have gone Frankenstein; roughly the robotic equivalent of treason.

Many bots resent and fear humans because of the immense power they have over bots. While searching constantly for ways to get rid of their damned asimov circuits, these bots frequently interpret human commands in the most annoyingly counterproductive manner possible. It is wise to be extremely careful when wording orders to bots.

Memory sectors and mem cards

Each bot has a certain amount of random access memory (RAM), expressed in memory sectors. One memory sector can hold software sufficient to give a bot a skill or specialty at a rating of 1. Twenty memory sectors could be filled with software for one skill at level 20, or 20 specialties at rating 1, or any other combination of skills and specialties.

Most bots have ports for mem cards. A mem card is a cartridge, smaller than a mobile phone, that stores software. The bot can plug in the cartridge and load the software into its resident memory. Newer-model bots can take programs on thumbnail-size holographic chips, similar in form factor to multicorder program chips (but bots and multicorders cannot use each other's programs – different operating systems).

Each mem card contains software for a specific skill or Specialty, at a specific rating. For example, a card labelled 'Energy Weapons 7' loads the bot with software letting it fire lasers at Specialty rating 7. If the bot does not have at least 7 memory sectors, it cannot load the software. If it has 7 or more sectors but all are already occupied by other software, it must erase some software to make room for the laser weapon software.

Though a mem card can give a bot knowledge of any skill or specialty, the bot's physical housing constrains its use of the software. Even if a cranebot has a memcard with Medical 15 software, the fact that its manipulatory digits are the size of cars makes it hard to perform microsurgery.

By the way, CPU occasionally mislabels software packages. The PCs load a bot with what they think is one skill but turns out to be another one entirely. Of course, a well prepared Troubleshooter team would handle this without problem. Right?

There is absolutely no truth to the rumour that Frankensteined robots can 'infect' mem cards, passing on the dysfunction to other bots who use the cards. Rumours are treason.

Combat with bots

Combat with bots is similar to combat with humans. Bots can have Violence skill and Specialties, just like humans. Some have built-in weapons similar to those available to humans, or human-like appendages that can employ weapons designed for humans. (If equipped with more than one weapon, the bot can fire all weapons in a single round.) Bots may have built-in armour or shielding that provides protection similar to human armour. A warbot may be more heavily-armoured than any human.

However, bots, being Non-Player Characters, have no Perversity points and thus cannot affect die rolls. Unless you want them to.

A bot's combat characteristics include its Violence Specialties, the types of weapons either inbuilt or carried and its inbuilt armour rating. Though these can change as you require, it is usually

easiest to assume a given bot has default combat characteristics.

Bot damage effect equivalents

When a bot is damaged, use the damage steps for objects described in Chapter 27, 'Damage and injuries': Okay, Lightly damaged, Impaired, Heavily damaged, Busted, Junked, Vaporised. Some notes on individual conditions:

Lightly damaged: The bot is Snafued in the next round. If you want, you can let all players spend Perversity to reduce all the bot's rolls until it is repaired.

Heavily damaged: Severe malfunction; you can let the players' Perversity spending count double, if you wish or just reduce the bot's success numbers arbitrarily.

Busted, Junked: Parts are salvageable, particularly the well-protected bot brain.

Vaporised: No parts salvageable.

A damaged bot may act in unpredictable ways. Improvise freely for the players' amusement and discomfort.

Bot types

There are hundreds of different types of bots. Troubleshooters can commonly expect to encounter docbots, jackobots, scrubots, warbots and various forms of experimental bot, like the infamous funbots. The GM should feel free to introduce new bots at the drop of a hatbot.

Combots

A combot is a pocket warbot. It is just like a warbot, only smaller and less powerful. So, if you had a job that was not quite good enough for a warbot, you would use a combot.

Combots *hate* being compared to warbots. They despise living in the shadow (often literally) of the bigger, cooler, better-armed and more prestigious warbots. Combots therefore overcompensate by shooting everything in sight, starting with the last person to compare them to a warbot. As combots are somewhat smaller than warbots, they are more suited to being assigned to troubleshooter missions – often by clueless briefing officers who refer to them as warbots.

Docbot

Docbots are medical robots. They range in complexity from simple first-aid bots to fully automatic surgical and intensive-care units. Each model is rated for its medical skill, from the portable docbot Model 4 (Medical specialty rating 4) to the room-sized docbot Model 18 (Medical specialty rating 18). Generally the docbot's model number equals its Medical specialty rating.

The docbot most familiar to Troubleshooters is the Model 8 (Medical specialty 8). The body is shaped like a small, powerful human dwarf and it can go almost anywhere a human can. In its massive torso it stores the equivalent of a small mobile medical unit, including a veritable drugstore of painkillers, coagulants, peptides, amphetamines, emetics and so on, plus medical supplies, a small chemical-biological analysis unit, ample supplies of plastiflesh and blood substitute and emergency surgical gear.

When a docbot is assigned to a mission team, The Computer or the mission officer assigns one member of the team (usually the Equipment Guy) as its controller; it will obey only his orders. The controller may assign a second controller in the event of his demise, the second controller may assign a third controller in the event of his untimely death and so on.

Because the Model 8 can set limbs, staunch bleeding and seal all but the most ghastly wounds, it can stave off death even for seriously wounded Troubleshooters. On a mission the bot's authorised operator can order the docbot to use all necessary treatments to return a Troubleshooter to duty. In one round the bot can pump a severely maimed victim full of combat-strength happiness drugs and send him cheerfully hopping, crawling or rolling back into battle.

Jackobot

Jackobots are all-purpose robots designed to do anything a human can. They stand about 1.5 metres tall; the transport module is a flexible, articulated chassis with two sets of soft plastic treads. On this chassis is mounted a turret-like cylinder roughly corresponding to a human torso. Atop the cylinder is a



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cluster of sensors and communications equipment corresponding to a human head in size and basic function. Two thick manipulator arms with four degrees of freedom extend from the cylinder, functioning like human arms.

Jackobot brains have true intelligence and therefore develop humanlike personalities. In addition, they have large amounts of RAM and many ports for mem cartridges. Thus any jackobot has potentially any skill or specialty, given the proper cartridge. Because of the memory limitations of individual models, only a certain number of skill programs can be resident in memory at any one time. However, a jackobot can reprogram itself within one Combat Round simply by unplugging one cartridge and inserting another.

Scrubot

Ah, the scrubot. The iconic bot. A little box of toxic chemicals, overheating brain chips, psychosis and scrubbing brushes, rattling through the pipes and air vents of Alpha Complex like over-sugared and citrus-smelling rats in the walls... who doesn't love the scrubot?

The answer is 'anyone who has ever met a scrubot'. The best scrubbers are merely surly, uncooperative and capricious. The worst go for your throat if you catch their camera, squealing that the inside of your jugular vein is absolutely *filthy* and must be cleaned *immediately*.

Scrubots are equipped with a range of high-pressure sprays, caustic chemicals, toxic air fresheners and high-speed vibrating brushes and scrubbers. Sometimes, they even bother to clean things with these attachments. Tech Services clones tell strange tales of scrubot colonies deep in the bowels of Alpha Complex, where the weird little bots have built nests of scavenged trash and formed their own bizarre culture...or cult.

Warbot

Take, say, a small mountain. Pour steel over it. Wait until it sets. Then stick it full of nuclear reactors, railguns, laser cannons, particle beams, nuclear missiles, plasma generators and even more exotic and unlikely guns. Now, put a very small and very stressed bot brain on top of the

whole apocalyptic enchilada and stand very very very very well back.

Vehicles

Citizens of **BLUE** Clearance or higher may legitimately own a vehicle as personal equipment and **ULTRAVIOLET** Clearance permits a citizen to commandeer any vehicle at will. The Computer temporarily assigns vehicles to Troubleshooters according to availability and the needs of each mission.

Automatic (bot) vehicles

Because almost all vehicles in Alpha Complex have bot brains, any character can normally command these vehicles to operate in their self-directed mode. Sounds neat, doesn't it? Not so fast.

Have you ever ridden in a car that talks? 'A door is ajar. A door is ajar. Please fasten your seatbelt. Thank you.' Urgh. It is bad enough to have an idiot voice nagging you over trivia; imagine how much worse things would be if the voice had intelligence and even control over the vehicle.

Welcome to Alpha Complex. Few citizens receive training in any Vehicle Operation specialties, so passengers must rely on the bot. This can lead to problems:

Flybot: Please fasten your seat belt.

Troubleshooter: Shut up!

Flybot: Hey, look, you're supposed to wear your seat belt.

Troubleshooter: Shut up, I said!

Flybot: Well, okay, buddy, I mean, it's your life.

Troubleshooter: Okay, we turn left here. *[Turns wheel. Flybot fails to respond.]*

Flybot: Are you sure you want to go left here?

Troubleshooter: Yes! Yes, dammit! Do what I tell you!

Flybot: Well, okay. If you insist. *[Flybot turns. Time passes.]*

Flybot: Shouldn't we climb a bit or something?

Troubleshooter: Huh? Why? *[Through the viewscreen looms a huge mountain, shrouded in mist. Troubleshooter yelps.]* Why didn't you tell me we were headed into a mountain? *[Wrenches at wheel.]*

Flybot: You said 'left turn,' so I turned left. I suggested maybe we should do

something else, but nooo. You were pretty rude about it, too. *[Turns desperately; a wingspar snaps; wing begins to shudder; G-forces wrack the cabin.]*

Troubleshooter:

Sorrysorrysorryohplease pleasee...

Manual drive

Any character with the Vehicle Ops and Maintenance specialty in the Hardware skill can drive a vehicle manually.

Inadequately trained operators always manage to get themselves into some kind of trouble – often fatal trouble. Even if they survive their mistakes, they face steep fines for damaging valuable equipment. This encourages Troubleshooters to be careful with their assigned vehicles. Unfortunately, being careful is not always enough.

Each vehicle has a Security Clearance. In normal circumstances, only citizens of the appropriate Clearance are assigned vehicles. A citizen of equal or higher Clearance can access the vehicle's online help system and learn how to operate it.

However, The Computer considers Troubleshooter missions of the utmost importance to Alpha Complex and unstintingly assigns resources to Troubleshooter missions. Frequently Troubleshooters are assigned vehicles of much higher Clearance – **BLUE**, **INDIGO** or **VIOLET**. These vehicles are extremely powerful and often heavily armed. Unfortunately, the Troubleshooters do not have the requisite Security Clearance to access the user manual and The Computer is not about to permit such a drastic breach of regulations. Trying to operate a vehicle with no knowledge of its abilities can be frustrating:

Troubleshooter: Okay, I ease the flybot into gear.

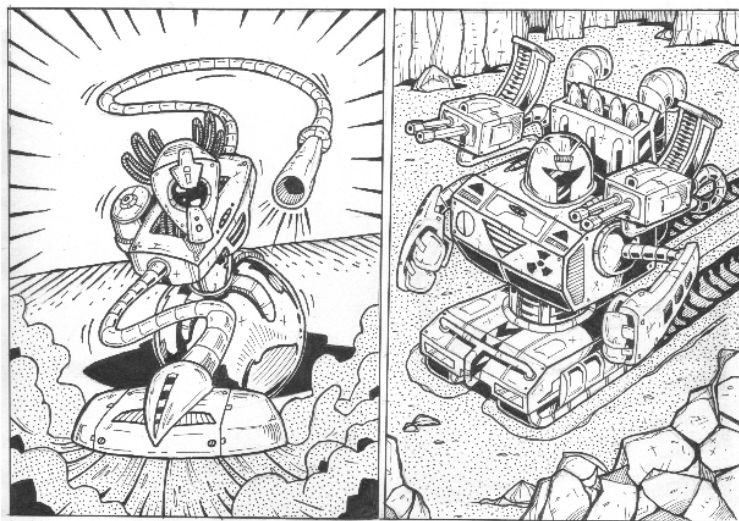
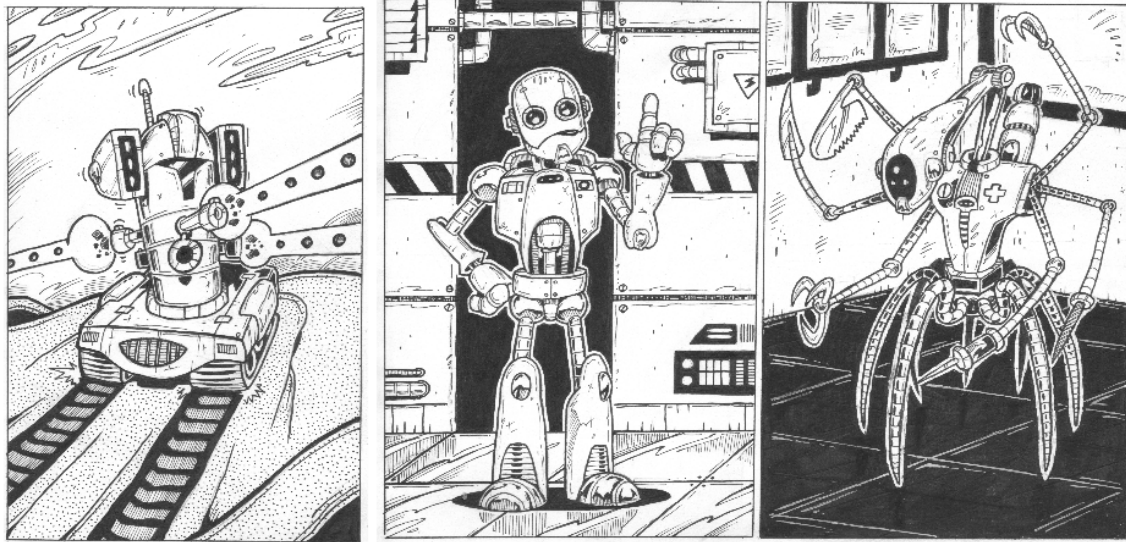
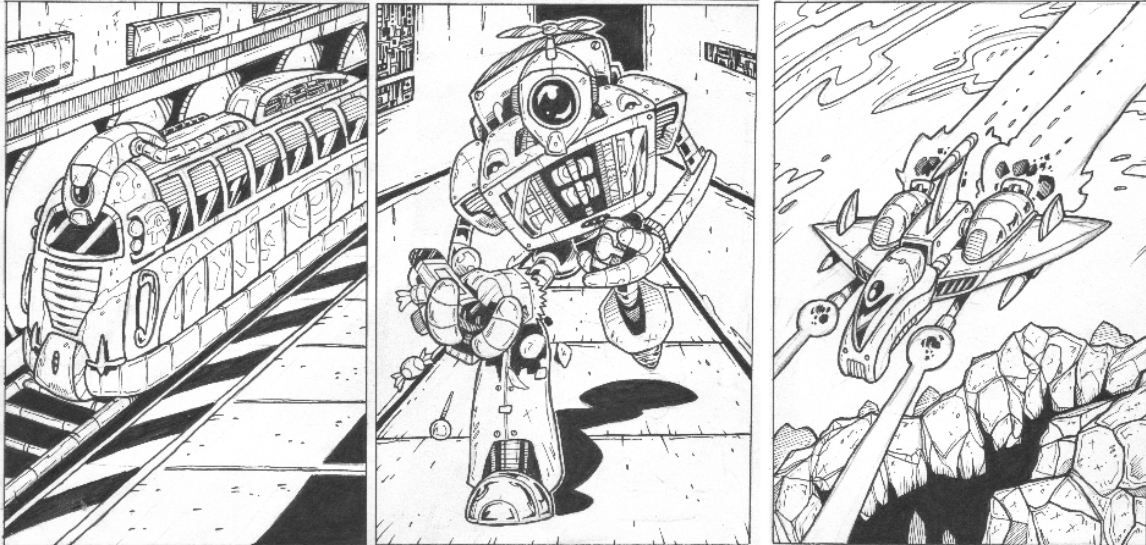
Gamemaster: With a dramatic *whump*, the steam cannon launches you out the tubes at Mach 3. Bill-R is sucked out his window by the slipstream.

Troubleshooter: I hit the 'close windows' switch.

Gamemaster: Which switch is that?

Troubleshooter: Ah – the one by my armrest?

24. EQUIPMENT



'Bots are your plastic pals. Or, in the case of warbots, your titanium steel and depleted uranium pals.'



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Gamemaster: Ah, the emergency eject. Another *whump*; the explosive bolts fire and the doors and roof fly off. Did you have your seatbelt on?

Troubleshooter: What seatbelt?

Gamemaster: Aha. Your chair launches upward with tremendous velocity. You tumble out of it. You are thrust suddenly into a Mach 3 wind [*rolls a die*]. Okay, you're falling. Below you crazily tumbles a green-blue-and-brown object. It fills an entire hemisphere.

Troubleshooter: The Earth?

Gamemaster: That's right. Nearby, you hear a third *whump* and a parachute opens. The empty chair descends slowly at the end of its chute. The green-blue-and-brown object is approaching rapidly. What do you do?

Troubleshooter: Spread my arms real wide?

Gamemaster: Right. Whammo. New clones. Briefing. Outfitting. Service service. Your clone backups find the Experimental Flybot Launch Station. The duty officer shakes his head sadly and says, 'Sure hope you do better than that last bunch.'

General vehicle types

Autocar: The most common type of vehicle inside Alpha Complex, corresponding to modern personal cars, small trucks and vans. They are 'auto' cars in the sense that they have autonomous bot brains that take direction from automatic guidance systems that run beneath the surface of all roadways in

Alpha Complex. Characters with the appropriate Vehicle Operations skill can operate the cars manually for unusual manoeuvres or outside the range of guidance systems. Autocars come in all shapes and sizes and are in relatively good supply.

Copter: Similar to modern helicopters. Small, two-man models are relatively common. In addition to the equivalent of personnel carriers, transports and gunships, there is also a small combat jetcopter capable of high speeds and agile manoeuvres.

Crawler: Tracked all-terrain vehicle used for missions in ruined sectors. Crawlers come in various sizes and designs. Some are specifically intended to carry personnel; some are for transporting raw materials from subterranean mines; some are armoured and designed for military applications. They are relatively slow but can travel in extremely rough terrain and are reliable watercraft in the calm waters of underground lakes.

Flybot: A general term for aircraft with bot guidance systems. Most long-range but low Clearance Troubleshooter missions require flybots, because the Troubleshooters usually lack the skills and Clearances to manually pilot aircraft. The most serious problems in dealing with flybots involve the often quirky bot intelligences that guide them.

Hover: A specialised air-cushion vehicle popular in Old Reckoning times. The Armed Forces still use hovers in abandoned sectors or Outdoors, when missions permit using the ancient roads and rubble-strewn tunnels. Hovers can also cross lakes and large rivers. They are breathtakingly fast on good roads and across calm water but they are not safe on difficult terrain or rough water. They make poor combat vehicles, because they bear little armour or armament. There are various sizes of hovers but Troubleshooters usually use the six-passenger version.

Transbot: This vehicle corresponds to our tractor-trailer trucks and railroad cars. Each transbot is controlled by a bot brain but skilled human operators drive them manually on sections of roadway where automatic guidance systems are no longer maintained or were never installed. Transbots can also drive through tunnels in abandoned sectors, if the rubble is not piled too high. Transbots are not designed to carry passengers but ingenious Troubleshooters and traitors manage to hitch rides in the same way bums used to jump freight trains.

Vulturecraft: A general term for a variety of combat and close support aircraft used by elite Vulture Squadrons of the Armed Forces. The acme of Alpha Complex's military strength, Vulturecraft are equipped with the latest technology in weapons, sensors and guidance systems.

25. MUTANT POWERS

25. Mutant Powers

Every Player Character has a mutant power. In theory, his power lets him do something nifty, something special to help him survive in Alpha Complex. Of course, nothing is as simple as that. Mutants are traitors, after all and subject to immediate execution.

Which leads to a question: if The Computer is so careful to make sure that its citizens are normal humans bereft of weird alterations in DNA – indeed, so careful that it executes anyone out of the norm – how did mutation come to be so widespread?

Obviously, something strange is going on. So what is the source of all these mutations?

The origin of mutant powers in Alpha Complex

Beats us. It is not clear that anyone cares. We offered a bunch of speculative and totally bogus reasons in earlier editions of **PARANOIA** and you know what? Nobody, but nobody, ever said, 'Those reasons are totally bogus, I want some more plausible reasons.' Gamemasters seemed to understand how this game, which lets characters float around and set things on fire and eat uranium, was not all that concerned with scientific plausibility.

But what the hell, you paid for this book, so we might as well give you the explanations from those earlier editions. Here are a few of the Causes of Overly Pervasive Aberration propounded in various R&D brainstorming sessions: Radiation from a global nuclear war (contradicts Computer history and all available scientific evidence but a common legend based on trashy Old Reckoning fiction).

The side-effects of pollution, food additives and exposure to bland video programming (based on other O.R. materials).

Officially recognised and/or clandestine genetic experiments carried out by The Computer/R&D/Secret Societies (positing biochemical or radiological agents for mutations and secret eugenics programs engineered by any number of crackpot factions).

The cumulative effects of exposure to

watches with radium dials. (They get pretty wild in those R&D brainstorming sessions.)

The Earth's passage through a cloud of cosmic dust. Benign interference by benevolent aliens.

...and so on, *ad nauseum*.

You can turn this bogus-ness to your advantage. Be blandly irresponsible in establishing an internally consistent rationale for all this mutation stuff. Change your tune to whatever suits your dramatic and narrative needs, whenever you need it, for whatever hokey reason. Keep the players guessing.

Ignorance and fear. Fear and ignorance.

Guidelines for mutant powers

Because of the bewildering variety of mutant powers, it is hard to come up with rules to cover them all without giving you more detail than you can remember. Also, we are on deadline. So instead, we give you rough guidelines and then encourage you to improvise wildly and irresponsibly.

Duration: Effects of mutant powers last exactly as long as you want them to. As guidance, you may want to have effects last one to five minutes, depending on the success margin of the power roll and your dramatic needs. Of course, with five-second Combat Rounds, a minute is an eternity. Sometimes the effect is over instantaneously, like a teleport for instance or it gets turned on permanently or something – like when a levitating mutant gets stuck 100 metres in the air as thousands of loyal witnesses report this remarkable event. You never know.

Range: If not specified, range is line of sight, with maximum effect within five metres of the character. Power and reliability decrease rapidly over distance as moderated by a cheerful but perverse GM. Again, good margins and entertaining intent may extend range and effectiveness.

Area/volume of effect: The area or volume of effect is usually a five-metre

Creating your own mutant powers

Any superhero roleplaying game provides lots of new powers. Keep these tips in mind for adapting them to **PARANOIA**:

- 👁️ **Hidden when not in use:** If a mutation is physically obvious, the character will be too easy a target for every other Troubleshooter.
- 👁️ **Conspicuous in use:** Conversely, an invisible power makes the character too hard a target. Even something normally unobvious, like doing a lightning math calculation, should make the mutant's nose turn red or something. We ourselves are big fans of glowing eyes.
- 👁️ **Bizarre consequences of failure:** A failed power roll should bring clear and possibly drastic consequences. When he fails a math problem, the Human Abacus mutant does not just get a wrong answer; no, his mental collapse causes him to recite numbers uncontrollably. Okay, that is not the funniest idea you have ever heard but the failure does not necessarily have to be funny – just dangerous.

circle or sphere. Except when it isn't. Which is now and then.

Tips for staging mutant powers

Make your mutant power effect descriptions colourful and imaginative. Give lots of sensory detail – neat visuals, weird sounds, creepy sensations, fetid stench.

A failed Power roll seldom means 'nothing happens.' *Something* happens, okay? Failure means the mutant cannot control it.

Make backfires as wild and offbeat as possible. When a character fails by a wide margin, go to town. The more incredible and exaggerated the effect, the more entertaining the resulting disaster. For example, a character really klutzes his power roll for regeneration. So maybe he grows a couple of dozen extra arms



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or gills, or begins shrinking, or causes identical injuries to every citizen within a kilometre.

Do not let mutant powers get too reliable or useful. This is not a superhero game. When players appear grateful for their mutant powers, you are doing something wrong.

Absorption

Firing lasers at a mutant with absorption is like shooting water pistols at a sponge. Lasers, sound, plasma, explosions – it doesn't matter what energy you throw, the mutant's body simply sucks in the energy, like an unsupervised **INFRARED** with a straw in a ColdFun factory. A mutant with Absorption struck by an energy attack (lasers, blasters and sonics, plasma generators, tacnukes) reduces damage suffered by a number of steps equal to the margin by which the Power roll is made. If that reduces the damage below the minimum damage level of the attack, the attack hits but has no effect.

A failed Power roll means the mutant reflects the energy attack rather than absorbing it, inflicting minimum damage for that attack to everyone standing within a couple of metres. For the mutant and all his one-time friends gathered around, think the char-grilled look of a cartoon character that just picked up an exploding bomb.

Generally a mutant with Absorption is recognisable by the way his hair stands on end. Touching the mutant results in a painful spark. After absorbing energy from some source, the mutant glows faintly, with the halo intensifying based on the quantity of energy absorbed. The lucky character who survives the explosion of a tacnuke becomes a blinding target, assuming anyone else in the sector survived.

Acidic Blood

The mutant's blood is actually a potent molecular acid. It does not affect him but if he is injured, the spilled blood will eat through almost anything. There are two ways to use this power.

Firstly, it can be used to destroy objects (or people). Assume the Acidic Blood deals W3V damage on a successful attack. Of course, blood tends to be inside the Troubleshooter, while most targets are outside. To actually attack with the blood,

he will have to deliberately injure himself. You can sabotage items by just pricking your finger and bleeding on a sensitive area but spraying blood on an enemy means Wounding yourself at least.

Secondly, the power functions as a passive defence. If the mutant is wounded, acidic blood sprays everywhere – which means that an attacker in close proximity will get hit with the spray. Note that laser attacks tend to flash-boil the victim's blood, causing the target to explode messily and spread blood and gore liberally around the area.

Adhesive Skin

Sticky secretions from the skin on the mutant's extremities make it possible to climb walls, hang from ceilings or exert an almost unbreakable grip on a held object. The mutant can apply an unerring, near-unbeatable grapple attack.

The adhesive may stick to walls, flesh or clothing but not all three. When the player creates his character, either you or he should define which one of these the adhesive sticks to. Maybe he can learn to master other substances later.

When the mutant clammers up the side of a food vat or grabs a Commie traitor's neck, make a Power roll. The margin determines how long the adhesive secretion lasts. A narrow margin (4 or less) indicates the mutant can adhere for a round or two; 5+ means several rounds; 10+ suggests the adhesive sticks for a scene or longer. If you wish, you can also apply the margin to improve the success chance of the mutant's later rolls to retain his firm grip.

A failed Power roll means either the mutation does not work at all or it works too well, gluing the mutant to a surface or fellow citizen like a full-body coating of superglue. Unfortunately, the mutant adhesive does not react at all to normal solvents, though R&D have had provisional success with experimental mutant glue removers.

Adrenalin Control

Adrenalin control lets a character temporarily boost his strength and agility to superhuman levels for a minute or so. He temporarily increases or acquires

the Violence Specialties, Agility and Unarmed Combat at rating 18 each.

After he has used Adrenalin Control, the character suffers a Wound but not in any particular location; in effect, the character is in shock. He remains 'wounded' until he has several hours of uninterrupted, tranquil rest (not likely during a mission) or a healthy nap. If he uses this power twice in succession without recovering from the first 'wound', the second use 'Downs' him – he falls unconscious and cannot be aroused for several hours, after which he awakens, dazed, groggy but essentially normal.

While using this power, a character can perform prodigious physical feats – lift autocars, zoom like a cheetah, take two or three actions in a round and so on. Adrenalin pumps through his body and tells it to burn all available fuel and to ignore design specifications – sometimes with unfortunate consequences for flesh, connective tissue and bone. The central principle: he's Superman for a minute but make him pay for it.

GM: No problem. You grab the berserk, one-ton scrubot, heft it to the melodious accompaniment of popping tendons, toss it lightly over the catwalk rail and watch it plunge through the floor below. You lie down suddenly. Let's see which particular kind of hernia you have... *[Rolls die.]*

Bouncy

The mutant can change the material properties of his body to behave like a springy, high-density rubber, permitting him to survive long falls and high-impact collisions. Of course, he will ricochet around like a superball fired out of a bazooka, which is pretty obviously abnormal – but it is still better than decorating the walls of a transtube tunnel or doing the Big Pancake onto plasticrete.

Have the mutant make a Power roll, with a penalty for 'attempting to concentrate in the face of imminent death,' if you feel like it. (Hey, he could have activated the power before going into that transtube tunnel.) A low margin of success (4 or lower) means the effect lasts a round or two. A middling margin (5-9) means it lasts for a minute or two; 10+ causes it to last for an inconveniently long time.

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While active, this mutation also provides protection against Impact attacks (such as fists, knives, truncheons, slugthrowers, slugthrower rounds, pry-bars and really big lug-nuts tied to the end of a chain). Treat the Margin of success as Impact armour. This may well make the character more or less immune to Impact damage, which is fine. Just remember to have shots that bounce off of the intrepid mutant go scattering around the area, hitting whatever is most inconvenient for everyone concerned. A mutant under the influence of this power has a hard time bending his limbs or moving around with any grace. Treat his Violence as 1 while it is active.

Bureaucratic Intuition

The wide-ranging bureaucracy of Alpha Complex is in constant flux – changing, evolving and shedding old layers of regulatory skin, generally overnight while no one is looking. This power lets a mutant deduce the basic operating and procedural principles of an unfamiliar bureaucratic function just by examining it. The mutant must examine some aspect of the procedure for several minutes (roll a dice or concoct an arbitrary period of time, depending on how convoluted the process is and how little you want the players to work it out). Then you make the mutant's Power attribute roll. If the roll succeeds, the mutant fathoms the basic procedures of the red tape he is faced with. If the check fails, the mutant believes he has understood the process but his information will be slightly incomplete or incorrect.

The margin of failure or success determines how effectively the mutant deals with the bureaucratic nightmare. Makes lots of attribute rolls against Access, most of them entirely gratuitous, possibly using the margin of failure or success of Bureaucratic Intuition as a modifier. The mutant should, however, always have the distinct feeling he is going about things the right way and success will follow the next 20-page form (completed in triplicate).

Answer abysmal failure – where not only the mutation fails but the ensuing Access rolls as well – by losing the character for a while in the labyrinths of PLC or (shudder) even HPD&MC. Perhaps the player could play another pre-made, lower Clearance hench-clone while the

primary character is lost in the conviction of his own bureaucratic quest for a scene or three. Extraordinary success – where the margin of the Power roll is 10+ and all Access rolls are remarkably successful too – should draw unwanted IntSec and CPU attention to the smart-aleck citizen who seems to have found the system's fast-track loophole.

Chameleon

The mutant has a certain amount of control over his skin pigments, permitting him to reactively alter his skin colour over his entire body. With this mutation one can become almost invisible to a casual observer, particularly in poor light, in cluttered interiors and Outdoors.

A successful Power roll makes the mutant temporarily immune to aimed weapon fire and attempts to locate him with the Concealment skill specialty, providing he keeps perfectly still. If they move, the power tries to react and keep up, reducing aimed attack and Concealment rolls by the margin of success. The Chameleon power offers no defence against area effect weapons.

A failed Power roll results in maximum contrast against the chosen background – something bright yellow or purple, for example – but the mutant is not immediately aware of the failure and also cannot get rid of the colour until sometime after it is not funny any more.

Though highly beneficial for those who do not want to be seen, to effectively employ this power the one drawback is that the mutant has to be naked.

Charm

Glands in the character's skin produce a pheromone-like substance that causes other humans to admire and trust him. Unfortunately, these pheromone-like substances also cause the character to admire and trust other humans. The net result is usually the mellow haze of fraternal camaraderie seen among dead drunks. Those affected tend to spill their guts, admitting shameful acts and bitter resentments they would normally never share and make deeply sincere pledges of communal feeling, loyalty and friendship that they immediately forget once the pheromones wear off.

However, because the mutant is aware that chemicals are conditioning this response, he has some ability to resist its effects, keeping his mouth shut and his affections under control while exploiting the general good feelings for his own selfish ends. Have the player make a Management skill or Chutzpah specialty roll. If successful, the character resists his own charm and does a number on his victims. If he fails, the character is equally at the mercy of his generous impulses.

The area of effect varies according to the environment. Indoors in enclosed spaces the power affects a more or less spherical volume of up to five metres. The effect lasts for about five minutes. The area of effect and duration is much more unreliable in open areas or in the Outdoors; depending on the air currents or wind, the five-metre sphere of effect may be downwind of the character and may move constantly, dissipating slowly or rapidly according to the turbulence of the air. As a guideline, in anything more than a gentle breeze, the effect has a maximum duration of less than a minute. In still air or a gentle breeze, the effect may last up to the full five minutes. Be guided by common sense and impish good humour in judging the duration and area of effect.

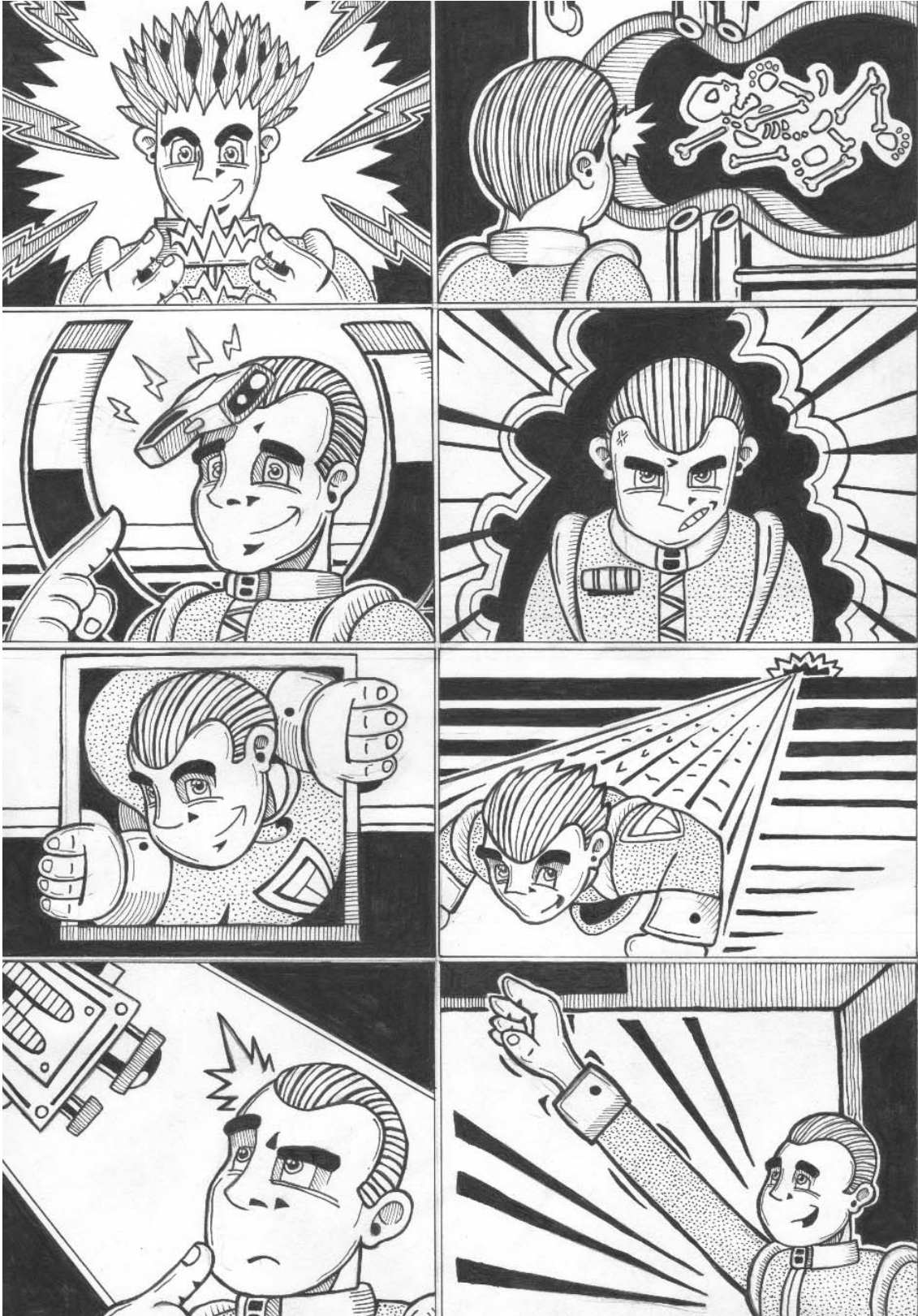
If the mutant's roll succeeds, non-bot NPCs feel extremely chummy toward the mutant, to the point that he need hardly make Management rolls against them; the rolls automatically succeed.

The greatest risk in using this power is that victims invariably return to normal after the effect wears off. They remember their abnormal behaviour and realise they have been hosed. Therefore, if he uses this power repeatedly on any subject, particularly other Player Characters, the mutant runs a considerable risk of revealing the mutation.

When the power is used on Player Characters (either by a Player Character or by an NPC), prepare notes for the players, explaining that they feel inexplicably friendly and cooperative, they are eager to share their deepest secrets and they should roleplay this insidious attack of trust and good will until further notice. Give no hint about the source of the feeling. When the effect has dissipated,



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'Mutants are traitors! Report all weird behavior to Internal Security!'

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give them notes reporting their feelings have returned to normal.

Corrosion

The mutant can exude a corrosive sweat that rapidly breaks down metallic objects touched, even metals that would not normally be prone to rust. The mutant needs a successful Power roll to release the mutated sweat, which immediately attacks any metal at hand. The degree of corrosion depends on exactly what he is trying to rust – the bigger the object, the greater the margin of success required. Simple success is enough to corrode a spoon and a little more might handle a laser pistol. An ample margin (5+) could corrode a whole docbot and a breathtaking margin (10+) would rust an autocar or the gargantuan caterpillar tracks of a warbot (and just about all other metallic objects within 5 metres). If the mutant wants to disable only a portion of the target, like a bot's braincase, the roll needs only a margin of 2 or 3. The power cannot corrode coated or shielded metal, like a moisture-sealed barrel, diamond-coated battle armour or a scrubot vacuum-packed in clingwrap for freshness.

Mutants with Corrosion sweat readily and profusely under exertion or high temperature. Sweaty mutants smell faintly of vinegar and their mere touch may leave a residue of red-brown rust flakes. A failed Power roll means a cascade of sweat from every pore, spontaneously rusting any worn or carried metal objects and potentially rusting the floor beneath the mutant with an expanding puddle of acid.

Copy Mutant Power

When this power is activated, the mutant copies any one mutant power possessed by another person in close proximity. He does not get to choose what the power is or who he copies it from. The copier has a vague idea of what the power is when he copies it (*'it's an offensive power, it's something to do with bots, you feel like your nose is blocked all the time'*). He can use the copied power for the rest of the scene using his own Power attribute to fuel it.

The mutant can only copy one power at a time and cannot voluntarily drop a power – he has to wait for it to wear off.

A failed copying attempt means the mutant copies too much of the genetic code of another individual, causing weird effects like hair colour changes, bizarre allergies, cancers or MemoMax glitches.

Cryokinesis

The mutant can freeze objects, encasing them in a layer of hard, slippery, frigid ice. A higher margin of success generates more ice, more thoroughly encasing smaller objects or allowing larger objects to be affected. Higher margins also make the ice harder and colder – a success of 5 or more will be painful to touch with uncovered skin, which may be problem for the poor sap whose jumpsuit's just been frozen. Citizens touching extremely cold ice while wet get to experience the 'tongue stuck to the flagpole' effect first-hand.

Any object within sight may be affected, even if it is in someone else's possession. Alternately, the mutant may want to affect part of an object (such as coating the floor of a hallway) or just create some free-standing ice – in either of these cases, require a higher margin of success; this mutation is easier to use when the ice is focused around an item.

Some items will not react well to extreme cold – and no electronic device is going to be much helped by the water that may get inside it as the ice melts away. Coated items may be much harder to hold due to slipperiness, unless they are so cold that wet appendages stick to them. Even if they can be held, it is awfully hard to use a laser pistol or PDC that is in the middle of a hunk of ice.

Whether the ice formed by this power melts away at a normal rate or does so instantly or at some arbitrary time is up to you (and may vary from use to use).

A failed Power roll means the character freezes himself internally, which is bad. There is good news and bad news, though. The good news is that he will thaw out after about a scene or if exposed to a gentle heat source (flamethrowers do not count). The bad news is that if the Troubleshooter moves too quickly or exerts himself too much, then he cracks right down the middle.

Death Simulation

The mutant can voluntarily slow his metabolism to a point just short of death. In this state he requires no food or water for extended periods, he uses little oxygen and he can withstand exposure to temperature extremes that would normally cause death. Chemicals, toxins and infections in the mutant's system become ineffective in this state, so he gains waiting time for medical assistance. When the power is activated, the player should pass you a note indicating how long his trance will last – a minimum of one hour, a maximum of a few weeks. If his character has suffered fatal damage, Death Simulation can delay the inevitable, assuming the player passes you his note immediately.

While in this comatose state the mutant cannot voluntarily wake, nor can he be awakened by outside stimuli. The mutant can maintain the death state for up to five days without ill effects and can revive with one successful Power roll. If the state lasts more than five days, reduce the mutant's Power rating by the number of days he's simulating death; to revive, the mutant must succeed in a Power roll against his reduced rating.

Once awakened, the mutant cannot safely return to a comatose state for a number of days equal to that originally spent in the death state (rounded up to the nearest whole day – so a mutant who chooses to drop off for just an hour cannot do it again safely for a whole day). If the mutant simulates death again before this recovery period has passed, reduce his Power rating by half (rounding up). So, the mutant in the previous example, with Power 10, entering a death state on the same day he wakes up would be subject to an immediate check at Power 5 (half of 10). If the roll succeeds, the mutant can enter a death state again.

If the mutant fails any Power rolls, he slips into a true coma. The mutant will die in a number of days equal to his current Power rating and he can only be returned to normal by 1d20 days of professional medical care. Feel free to figure in some kind of permanent damage from the trauma of the failure, like reductions in Knowledge skills or lost Power. Other characters may find the comatose character a useful target for weapon tests and medical experimentation.



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Unlike most mutant powers, Death Simulation has no visible effects indicating it is a mutant power. Visible death simulations get quickly culled from the gene pool.

Deep Thought

The mutant's superhumanly brilliant mind can manage and juggle numbers, images and memories to achieve incredible feats of mental dexterity. He can quickly reduce problems to equations and solve them in terms of probabilities. He can retain information and images with crystal clarity, no matter how distant the memory or how brief the glimpse of a picture or diagram.

The player should submit to you a question or problem he believes his character would know or could calculate. Judge how difficult the query is and make a roll against the mutant's Power. If the check is successful, the character remembers or calculates accurately, with greater accuracy for a greater margin of success. If the Power check fails, or if you feel the request is beyond the mutant's ability to figure out, the character gains plausible but inaccurate information.

While using this ability to do things an ordinary smart person could not do, the mutant's eyes glow brightly. Anyone looking on could easily surmise, 'Hmm, something superhumanly brilliant is going on in that brainiac's mind. I'd better shoot him.'

Desolidity

The mutant adjusts the electroweak force of all the electrons in his body or something like that and turns immaterial. He can pass through solid objects like a phantom. Though in theory the power could be maintained until the mutant gets tired, a Desolidified mutant cannot breathe.

A marginal success (up to a margin of 4 on the Power roll) lets the mutant slip through cracks as an almost insubstantial mist and makes Impact and Bio attacks on him impractical, though Energy attacks remain effective. A more substantial success (margin 5+) lets the mutant actually pass through any solid object and renders him invulnerable to attack. Some odd, inexplicable scientific phenomenon, perhaps related to the

forgiving favour of Famous Game Designers, makes vertical movement impossible while desolid. However, a margin of 10+ indicates extreme success that overcomes this restriction – if 'success' is the word we want. The excessively desolid mutant plummets freely through the floor and (if he does not turn off the power in time) possibly the Earth's crust and outer mantle.

A failed Power roll actually causes the mutant to become more solid and dense, making breathing and movement a real struggle. A serious failure margin leaves the mutant walking like a mime in a high wind.

Oddly, certain substances or energies sometimes resist the desolid mutant, preventing safe passage. For example, a desolid mutant may be unable to pass through plastic; walking through a wall between two corridors, the mutant gets tangled in a web of plastic-sheathed wires and cables. Choose a substance arbitrarily whenever the mutation is used or at the start of each scene or at the beginning of a mission – whatever you prefer. If you do not feel like making a choice, use the table we kindly provide here:

- 1 Metal (walls, floors)
- 2-3 Metal (reactors, bot chassis)
- 4-5 Metal (wires, cables)
- 6 Plastic
- 7-8 Glass
- 9 Paper
- 10 Wood
- 11 Cardboard
- 12 Brick
- 13 Stone
- 14 Algae
- 15 Water
- 16 Goo/slime
- 17 Energy and magnetic fields
- 18 Rubber
- 19 Fabric (uniforms & curtains)
- 20 People

Detect Mutant Power

The mutant is acutely sensitive to the presence of mutant powers, even where mutants are not necessarily in close proximity (although this seems extremely unlikely in the midst of Alpha Complex). By concentrating, standing perfectly still, for the duration of the detection attempt, the mutant can detect the general location of mutants nearby

and garner some inkling of the power they possess. The ability cannot precisely identify individual powers. Otherwise IntSec's 'volunteer' registered mutants with this ability would be diligently tracking every non-registered mutant throughout Alpha Complex.

When a mutant with this power wants to detect, make a Power attribute roll for the character. Depending on the margin of success, the mutant gets a general feel of the number of mutants nearby, some sense of how much danger the local mutations represent to the mutant and whether any mutations have recently been used. With a small margin (4 or less), the impressions should be extremely general; at 5+ the sense of danger and awareness of recent power usage should become focused, even pinpointing an individual power (describe it to the player by a general feeling rather than a specific name).

With a startling success (margin 10+), the mutant literally taps into the local mutant net and can sense virtually everything. The mutant knows exactly who, within line of sight, has used a power recently and exactly what mutation each individual possesses. The linkage into the local environment is so clear, in fact, all those mutants scanned by the detecting mutant become vividly aware they have been scanned and who was responsible.

A failed Power roll results in equal measures of sensation and detail but the specifics are totally wrong. The sense of danger will either be exaggerated or underplayed; the detecting mutant may sense mutants everywhere, embedded in the walls and hiding behind doors; the detecting mutant may also become 'stuck' on a particular power and sense it everywhere. Over time the mutant may start sensing the stuck power around him even when he is not actively detecting.

Doom Magnet

This mutant is doomed. Doomed. Doooooomed.

On the bright side, he gets to pick when it happens. When he makes a successful Power roll, the most immediately obvious impending disaster happens – the bomb in the room goes off, the reactor leaks,

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the Commies throw a grenade, the food vat overflows and so forth. This disaster is always one that threatens the life of the mutant. It will, of course, also threaten the lives of anyone standing nearby too and at least the mutant gets to pick the timing of the catastrophe (*'why are you putting on that gas mask now, citizen?'*).

If the Power roll fails, then another, less obvious disaster strikes, one the mutant has not prepared for.

Electroshock

The character is extremely resistant to electrical shocks (stungun shocks in particular) and when you roll his Power rating or less, can deliver one electric shock per round to any one victim within a five-metre radius. The effect is equivalent to that of a stungun. If the roll fails, something goes wrong: The character stuns himself or blows out his communications gear or makes everyone's hair stand on end or broadcasts in the shortwave band.

To see whether the target resists the effect of an electric shock, roll against the target's Power rating. Modify the success number for particularly large (high tension wire) or small (watch battery) voltages.

Electroshock can also short out unshielded electronic equipment, including bots. Bot brains, confession booths and The Computer's own hardware are usually shielded against all but the most powerful shocks.

Empathy

This character has a sort of hind-brain telepathy – he can read a victim's emotional brain activity and project his own emotions to manipulate the victim's emotional state.

Reading a victim's emotions is particularly useful when trying to detect a liar-in-progress; a successful roll may reveal intent to mislead. When trying to assess another's reaction, a successful empathy power roll entitles the user to GM hints. A successful empathy roll should improve the success chance of Management specialty rolls.

The most effective use of empathy is to project strong emotions on a victim in order to interfere with his ability to reason and make judgments. The empath works

himself up into a frenzy, then projects his emotions onto his victim. The victim is overcome by a temporary obsessive need to indulge himself in dramatic actions which express the emotion – sobbing, screaming, cowering, cackling maniacally, smashing things – a real opportunity for the hysterically-inclined roleplayer. If the Power roll succeeds, the victim is affected; the more successful the roll, the more exaggerated and obsessive the performance. If the roll fails, the victim is unaffected and the empath himself may become obsessed, suffering temporary insanity proportional to the margin of failure.

This skill is most reliable when used on an individual. Attempting empathy with a crowd is less accurate and reliable and with a failed Power roll the empath is more likely to get caught up in the emotions of the crowd. Take the player aside, explain the mood of the crowd and encourage him to roleplay a victim of mob psychology.

Empathic Liar

The mutant possesses a low level form of telepathy. He can subconsciously read the mind of a target and tell that person *exactly* what they want to hear. The downside is that the mutant enters a trance when he is lying and has absolutely no idea what he just said.

For example:

GM: Dirk-G points his laser pistol at your face. 'Any last words, vat slime?' he growls as his finger tightens on the trigger.

Mutant: Agh, I'll use Empathic Liar.

GM: Ok, you black out. When you come to, Dirk-G is hugging you and whispering 'I should never have doubted you! Once you have done as you just promised, then we shall laugh as our mutual foe begs for mercy! Do not tarry, or the bot will have already washed the last boot!'

Empathic Liar does not really get the user out of trouble; it just postpones the trouble for a while, which then comes back – with interest. When in the empathic trance, the mutant may use codewords and pass phrases dredged from the memories of the target or promise anything that the target wants to hear. (Often, *'I'll take care of this massive problem, leave it to me, I'll take full responsibility'*) A failed roll means the liar

picks up on the wrong memories and insults the target.

The mutant can try to use Empathic Liar on multiple people at once but this is almost sure to backfire, unless there is one set of lies that will satisfy everyone. Oh, and there are some situations where no lie will help – if the target is determined to kill you, then even the most convincing lie will not help.

The power only works on living minds, not The Computer or bots.

Energy Field

This power produces a field that absorbs energy and radiates it uniformly from the surface of the field as heat and light. The field follows the external contours of the body, extending about six inches from the skin surface. In game terms, this acts like armour rating 3 against all attacks.

The field usually lasts no more than a minute and leaves the user exhausted and in shock – the equivalent of Wounded – until he has had a few hours of rest or a nice nap. The field is also unfortunately rather showy – it sparkles and shimmers and emits brief, blinding flashes of light and heat when struck by melee or ranged weapons or by other sources of energy (say, a speeding autocar) or when the character runs into a wall or falls from a great height.

This field is subtle, complex and unreliable in its workings. When the Power roll fails, lots of nasty things can happen. Sometimes it reflects all energy – light, for example, leaving the character blind. Sometimes the energy is radiated from a small fraction of the surface – from the feet, for example, burning a hole in the floor – or the energy is radiated from the inner surface, parboiling the mutant.

Note that when the mutant fires a ranged weapon from inside the field – when the barrel does not protrude through the field – the weapon's projectile or beam may be reflected from the inner surface. Note that sometimes the field fluctuates wildly, expanding from and then contracting toward the body.

Energy Suppression

When this power is active, the mutant's weird influence deactivates any electronic



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devices within one metre or so of his body. This shuts down laser pistols and other high-tech weapons, PDCs, cameras, bomb detonators, wristwatches, bots, cybernetic limbs and pacemakers. The suppression lasts for a few rounds; an especially high margin of success allows the mutant to expand the range of the field.

Note that turning off your PDC or multicorder is a crime in Alpha Complex.

A failed roll means some useful devices fail while others keep working. The mutant might just have fried his laser pistol while leaving everyone else's working just fine.

Evil Twin

The mutant has a split personality and he is the Evil Twin.

The Good Twin shares the body with the mutant. The Good Twin personality is loyal, heroic, brave and self-sacrificing. The Good Twin loves The Computer and would never ever associate with any traitors or Secret Societies.

Whenever the Evil Twin makes a Power roll, he can allow the Good Twin to temporarily take control of their shared body. This has several benefits:

- ☉ The Good Twin is so loyal that it will pass any loyalty test, even torture or brainscanning
- ☉ The Good Twin is immune to propaganda of any kind
- ☉ The Good Twin has really good Hygiene and Access scores
- ☉ If the character has been drugged with mind-altering drugs, the mutant can shove all the effects of the drugs onto the Good Twin
- ☉ At the GM's whim, the Good Twin may have other skills and contacts unavailable to the Evil Twin (*your other personality knows Nuclear Engineering...*)

With a successful Power roll, the mutant brings the Good Twin to the surface just long enough for the twin to do its job, then the Good Twin gets shoved back down to the subconscious again.

Growth

The mutant can inflate the molecular structure of his body to increase his height and size. Increased size means greater strength, stamina, reach and speed. A successful Power roll increases the character's size by a quarter and his mass by about a third (27/64ths, if you have a calculator). For each 5 points of the margin on the success roll, the mutant increases his size by another quarter of his original dimensions, with a corresponding increase in mass. The mutant's speed increases by the same fraction as his size and damage he inflicts will increase – although the specifics are left to you, rather than bogging the power down in mechanics. Work on the assumption a character the size of a giant will find it easier than usual to pull people's limbs out of their sockets.

The mutant's size also means he can shrug off all Snafued damage like it never happened, up to a limit of the margin of success. So, the grown mutant whose Power roll had a margin of 4 could take four Snafued results before actually suffering effects from the next Snafued result. If that all seems too complicated, ignore it and think 'superhuman hulk with a tendency to break things'. The downside? Well, a giant character becomes a much easier target to hit and when the Growth wears off all those ignored Snafued wounds hit like a runaway transbot.

If the mutant's Power roll to grow fails, the mutation freaks out and causes certain parts to grow at random or, in extreme failure, turns the character into a bloated beachball who tends to block corridors.

Hurricane Lungs

The mutant has incredibly strong and stretchy lungs. He can suck in a huge amount of air and exhale it in one hurricane-strength blast. It's like Superman, if Superman was a balloon. When this power is used, the mutant's chest inflates to three or four times its previous size before he exhales. The hurricane deals S3D damage to everything within a 10 metre cone of the mutant. It takes two rounds to use this power – one to inhale, one to exhale.

Yes, you can suck up enough air to make a vacuum in a small space or put out a fire. Yes, you can use the exhalation to freeze things if you roll well enough. Yes, your expanded lungs contain the air at such high pressure that you will pop like a balloon if injured when using this power.

A failed Power roll means the mutant gets 'stuck' and cannot exhale. He can just run around like a zeppelin with legs and a squeaky voice until someone puts him out of his misery or the air slowly leaks out of his lungs.

Hypersenses

This power amplifies the five senses. The eyes can see clearly for great distances, magnify greatly and function well in near darkness or under blinding illumination. The ears can hear very low sounds or sounds at great distances. The skin is extremely sensitive, alert to changes in temperature and humidity, air pressure and so on. The nose is acute, detecting the subtlest smells even among overpowering odours. The taste buds can finely distinguish between familiar substances, even substances that have no distinctive taste to normal humans.

This power also gives the mutant superior discrimination in focusing on one aspect of a perception and ignoring the rest – for example, picking out one voice from an unruly crowd and distinguishing what is being said. Basically he's Daredevil, okay?

This is what the power does when it works right – when the Power roll succeeds. When the Power roll fails, things are not so swell. Maybe everything seems to be turned up too loud. Maybe normal human odours become appallingly overpowering. Maybe the character begins hallucinating – 'My skin's on fire! My tongue's exploding! My ears are melting! Aiiiee!' It is not easy being a mutant.

Hyperspeed

When under the effects of this power, the mutant can move incredibly fast, even faster than the eye can see. He can run faster than a speeding transbot and

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complete forms quicker than a computer. His reactions are not improved, so he cannot dodge lasers or react to problems faster but he can run or do repetitive tasks a lot faster than normal.

How much faster? It depends on the margin of success. Roll well enough and the mutant can break the sound barrier. Of course, that is normally followed by the mutant running into a wall.

Infravision

The mutant can see into the infrared, allowing him to perceive heat sources. He can even see in the dark, as long as there are variations of temperature. Oh, his eyes glow red when he is using this power. So, in your average pitch-black room, you can see everything and your team-mates can see absolutely nothing (apart from your balefully glowing fiery eyes).

A failed Power roll means that the character's vision shifts too far into the infrared and beyond, until all he can see are microwaves or something. A failed roll also means that the character's eyes glow very brightly even in normal lighting conditions.

Invisibility

This sounds like the ideal mutant power, doesn't it? Invisibility! Go anywhere, do anything, with no possible consequences! Well, it does not work quite like that.

Invisibility works by clouding the minds of others – they can still *see* you but they do not *notice* you. It only works on living minds, not bots, The Computer or security cameras. You can only affect a limited number of people at a time, equal to the margin of the Power roll. So, pass the check by five and you can vanish from the field of vision of five people.

On a failed Power roll, the mutant is not only not invisible; he becomes 'super-visible'. You do not ignore him, you really notice him and it is *annoying*. Just looking at the mutant makes the observer's blood boil.

Laser Reflection

By abstruse biochemical means, the mutant, er, alters the angle of refraction of his sweat, so any laser beams that hit him bounce off in a random direction. In

game terms, the mutant gains armour equal to the margin of success against lasers *only*. It is like super-reflec!

There are a few issues with the power. Firstly, when activated, the mutant's skin shimmers in a moderately pretty and extremely obvious way. Secondly, the beams have a nasty habit of getting reflected towards other team members, or towards convenient crates of high explosive.

Thirdly, the mutant has to make another Power roll to maintain his laser shield every few rounds.

Fourthly, if the Power roll fails, then add the margin of failure to the laser's margin of success when it comes to figuring the boost. For those not adept at translating game mechanic speak into English, that means that if the mutant fails his Power roll when he is being shot at, he gets double-killed.

Levitation

A field forms around the mutant's body that counteracts the force of gravity. (It makes the atoms spin funny or something.) The field follows the external contours of the body, extending a few centimetres beyond the skin's surface, affecting garments and objects within the field. This does not usually encompass powered-armour battlesuits but what business does a Troubleshooter have in one of those things anyway?

When the Power roll succeeds, the field overcomes and repels gravity and the mutant floats into the air. Depending on the degree of success, the mutant can more or less control the rate of ascent and descent, pitch, yaw and roll, for the duration of the mutant power. If he is real successful, maybe he can actually fly around; otherwise, he moves only up and down and can only move around by kicking off the ceiling or firing bullets in the opposite direction.

When the Power roll fails, something else happens. Sometimes nothing happens. Sometimes the force of gravity is amplified. Sometimes gravity is repelled all right – just a little harder and faster than the mutant can control. If there is a ceiling, wham. If no ceiling, Alpha Complex has a manned space program.

Haze

This mutation scrambles all light and sound in the vicinity. Citizens look like vaguely clone-shaped blurs, distinguishable only by extreme differences in size, shape or coloration. Bots look like shiny blobs. Speech is still (barely) comprehensible but voices come out flanged and distorted. Ambient sounds are likewise mangled, though their basic nature can still be heard. The net upshot of all of this is that everyone can see and hear what is happening but is unable to distinguish important details like 'What is that citizen pointing at me?', 'Who fired that slugthrower I just heard?' or 'Was that order given by our treasonous team leader or Friend Computer?'. The effects of the Haze reach about five metres in all directions from where the mutant invoked the power. Add two to the margin of success to determine how many rounds it lasts.

Ink Spray

The mutant can squirt a jet of thick black ink from any orifice, usually his nose. This ink is both sticky and slippery, adhering to anything it touches. The ink also rapidly soaks into paper and cloth, making it ideal for destroying paperwork like incriminating forms. It also blinds camera lens and clogs exhaust ports.

The margin of success determines the amount of ink produced and the velocity of the spray. A failed roll tends to result in the mutant spraying blood instead of ink and causing internal injury in the process.

Machine Empathy

Warning! Warning! This mutant power is REALLY treasonous! The Computer will execute anyone possessing it, regardless of other factors!

Some mutants can commune with the mystic forces of nature. Characters with machine empathy can commune with the ebb and flux of electrons, the opening and closing of logic gates, the destruction and reappearance of positrons in robotic brains. In short, the mutant is in tune with intelligent machines – robots and computers.

When the character's Power roll succeeds, robots and computers tend to like and trust the character. Robots and



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computers do not attack or kill the character unless they have specific orders or some other strong justification and The Computer generally gives the character the benefit of the doubt in matters of poor performance or treason. The character also may receive bonuses to Management rolls made versus bots and The Computer, because of his instinctive understanding and liking for machines.

If the Power roll fails, the mutant does not make contact or the intelligent machine picks up bad vibes – the more unsuccessful the roll, the badder the vibes. The robot, or The Computer, may get testy with the mutant, be uncooperative, make threats and generally make the mutant's life unpleasant.

Magnetise

The mutant can force an alignment of electromagnetic charge in a nearby object, turning it into a powerful magnet. The magnetic field can usually affect items about 5 metres distant, though this may vary wildly with GM whim, as may the strength – which you will note we have not described at all. It is more fun that way.

Precise Magnetise effects depend on circumstances. Large objects tend to pull smaller objects towards them, regardless of which one is actually magnetic. Do not worry much about accuracy – in **PARANOIA** you bend, fold, spindle and mutilate physical law as you see fit. (Is, say, tungsten attracted by a magnetic field? Hey, it is *now*!) For additional chaos, exploit the fact that similar magnetic charges repel each other. Because electric currents generate magnetic fields, you have license to fling around anything with embedded circuitry.

Whether or not magnetic fields corrupt the digital memory in PDCs, bots, data storage devices and so on is entirely up to you – perhaps Alpha Complex still uses magnetic-based memory technology, perhaps it has moved on to different tech. Most likely it mixes the two, with the least vulnerable systems used for critical equipment such as The Computer and some bots and cheaper magnetic memory for mass-produced items like PDCs.

Matter Eater

The character can digest and extract nourishment from virtually anything containing any organic material – dead leaves, poisonous mushrooms, even dirt. In addition, he can digest (but receives no nourishment from) any substance whatsoever – laser guns, data disks, auto parts, whatever.

When the character eats something, make a Power roll. If the roll succeeds, everything is fine. If not, the mutant experiences acute gastrointestinal pain and if the roll fails by a wide margin, may be Wounded, Maimed or even Killed.

This power can often be extremely helpful. For instance, it is a great way to get rid of awkward evidence – usually. Internal Security's increasing awareness of the Matter Eater mutation means IntSec **GREEN** goons may decide to turn an offender inside-out just to see what they find.

Mechanical Intuition

The mutant can examine an unfamiliar mechanical device and guess its basic operating and design principles. This is valuable when he deals with unusual artefacts discovered on missions and when the team gets unfamiliar equipment and experimental devices for a mission. Note that 'examining' means a very, very close, personal relationship with the device. Embrace the machine. Lick the machine.

Make a Power roll, adjusting the success chance according to the time the mutant spends examining the item, as well as his familiarity with similar devices. If the roll succeeds, the mutant discerns the basic operational and design principles of the device.

If the roll fails, the mutant thinks he understands the device but his information is more or less incomplete or inaccurate. For example, a mutant discovering an ancient soldering gun in the ruins of an Old Reckoning homestead might guess it is a primitive portable heat weapon. Or he might find the rusted remnants of a subcompact car and guess it was an armoured attack vehicle.

Mental Blast

The character can stimulate agonising brain activity in all living targets in a

five-metre radius. The attack affects all organic beings (except the character) within this radius. He cannot exempt any creature from its effects. Bots are unaffected.

If the Power roll is successful, each being within the radius makes a Violence roll with modifiers relative to the success of the Power roll. If a character fails his Violence roll, he suffers acute mental agony and is Snafued until the end of the next round. If his roll succeeds, he feels a flash of mental discomfort but experiences no ill effects.

If the Power roll fails, the effects of Mental Blast are more unpredictable. Sometimes the mutant himself is stunned or knocked unconscious. Sometimes a couple of victims' brains explode. Sometimes it seems as though nothing happens but citizens in neighbouring sectors pass out while operating heavy machinery or nuclear reactors.

No Mutant Power

If a player rolls this result, then the character still has a mutant power – he just does not know what it is. Roll again for the character's actual power. This power may have lain dormant all this time or is so subtle or obscure that the character has never noticed it before. The GM should roll to activate this power at a suitably dramatic or amusing moment.

Polymorphism

The character may alter his appearance and indeed his physical form. Mimicking another human being is easiest; anything which involves actually changing bone structure is rather difficult; and changing total mass is virtually impossible.

Have the player state what form he wishes to adopt, then make a Power roll. Modify the success chance for the difficulty of the change; anything other than human appearance should be a considerable strain. If the roll succeeds, the character has achieved more or less the form he wants – the lower the roll, the closer he gets. If the roll fails, so has the character – the greater the margin, the worse the failure.

The nature of a failure is up to you. Maybe he does not change form – outwardly. Maybe he changes to something completely different from what he

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'Anyone could be a mutant! Stay alert!'



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intended to become. Maybe he changes and everything is fine – but when he tries to change back, he finds he cannot – the modified form is now his 'natural' one.

The mutant remains in his changed form for one to five minutes, after which he spontaneously reverts to 'natural' form.

Puppeteer

The mutant can take remote control of a single part of a living target's body, such as an arm, leg or trigger finger. The body part moves in all respects as if it were the mutant's own. While controlling the selected part of the target, the mutant can still move and act normally but must himself make the movements he wants the target to mimic. The power does not work on bots. Range is line of sight.

The player names exactly one body part of the selected target – not (for instance) 'his eyes' but one specific eye. Make a Power roll. Success grants the mutant control of that part of the target's body and its component sub-parts. For instance, if the mutant controls the target's arm, he has fine control of that arm's fingers. Controlling the target's head or face means the target wears any expression and says anything the mutant wants.

The larger the part to be controlled, the greater the margin of success needed: margin 0-4 – a finger or eyelid; margin 5-9 – hand or foot; margin 10-14 – arm, leg or waist; margin 15+ – head or face (lots of muscles to track).

Control drains at least 1 Power point per round. The control lasts as long as the mutant has Power points.

Failure means the mutant himself spends a round or two as the puppet of that generous and charitable individual, the Gamemaster.

Push Mutant Power

This power taps into the same notional energy as Detect Mutant Power but instead of sensing mutant abilities, it amplifies them.

'What kind of wussy... cooperative... power is that!?' we hear you cry. Never fear. Push Mutant Powers can indubitably increase the effectiveness of another mutant's abilities but it can also activate them. When a surfeit of Push energy suddenly

floods through a mutant's system, as often as not he reflexively uses it.

When the mutant with Push Mutant Powers makes a successful Power roll, each other mutant in the area has his Power attribute boosted for a few seconds by the margin of success. Then make a Power roll for each boosted target – or, if you hate that many rolls, make one roll for the whole bunch. Success indicates immediate, involuntary mutation use; failure indicates the target has avoided accidental activation.

Needless to say, this mutation is fantastically useful in gathering blackmail evidence. Unfortunately, the accidents it inspires tend to target the mutant with Push Mutant Powers. This can be entertaining, in a painfully karmic way.

Two mutants with this power can get into an unstoppable feedback loop, causing all mutants in the vicinity to repeatedly have accidents with ever-escalating Power. Assume any mutant who reaches an effective Power of 50 or higher has a fatal heart attack, explodes or outright vaporises – assuming everyone in the area is not killed by one of the Pushed mutations first. (Pyrokinesis, anyone?)

If this power is used in cooperative fashion, it boosts Power as usual but the target being aided does not check for an accident. However, he will almost certainly end up with an overkill effect if he succeeds by 10+ or a mishap if he fails. Heck, these may happen in addition to the target's normal success – he has got energy to spare and manipulating it is tricky.

Psychic Flash

When this power is used, the mutant gets a momentary mental image of something very important or dangerous nearby – or in his immediate future. He might get an image of the laser pistol pointed at his back or of the bomb taped underneath the briefing room table or of a nefarious Commie watching the team through a security camera. Sometimes the flashes are useful but usually they are just confusing or alarming. Basically, this power lets the GM sow even more mistrust and confusion.

A failed Power roll means the character gets a useless or incomprehensible

image. It is impossible to 'zero in' on a particular image – if the mutant asks for repeated psychic flashes, he either gets the same flash over and over again or different images of potential dangers each time.

Pyrokinesis

The character can spontaneously generate a fire on any flammable object within a five-metre radius. The fire's size, intensity and rate of propagation depend on the target's combustibility and the Power roll's margin. If the roll is unsuccessful, the fire does not ignite or it ignites where it is not supposed to (like, in the mutant's utility belt) or it burns out of control.

Regeneration

The mutant can send biochemical messengers via the bloodstream to the site of an injury, directing all resources from other parts of the body to aid in its healing. The result is accelerated creation of healthy tissue and regeneration of tissues and organs that do not normally regenerate (nervous tissue, fingers, lungs and so on).

When the mutant is Wounded or Maimed, make a Power roll. If successful, the damage begins to heal itself – the greater the margin, the swifter the recovery. Further, the greater the margin, the more the mutant can control the outward appearance of healing – particularly important to avoid discovery of the mutant powers. As a rough guideline, a margin of 10+ means the injury is instantaneously healed (a real advantage in combat, though tough to explain) but a margin of 0 or 1 might mean the injury heals in several hours or days, depending on its seriousness.

An unsuccessful roll means the regeneration went awry. Maybe lots of parts duplicate themselves. Maybe the rapid tissue growth occurs in the wrong place or the wrong tissues are produced (scales, gills, fins, feathers, chitinous carapace).

Rubbery Bones

A skeletal mutation gives the mutant's bones the consistency of a dog's chew toy, rigid enough to support movement and action but with the flexibility to pass through narrow gaps where non-mutated skeletons dare not squeeze.

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The power is active constantly, though it is not readily visible without continuous study. The mutant's movements seem more fluid and occasionally his joints bend at angles that would normally splinter bone. ('I'm just limber, that's all.')

When Impact damage strikes the mutant, make a Power roll to see how well his bones react. Up to a success margin of 5, the mutant effectively gains Impact armour equal to the margin. So if a solid-slug cone rifle round hits the mutant and you roll an 8 against his Power attribute rating of 12 (margin: 4), assess damage as if he had 14 armour. With a substantial success (margin 5+), the mutant's skeleton completely rolls with the blow and takes no Impact damage at all. An incredibly lucky mutant (10+) bends so effectively he gets stuck and looks like a pile of coat hangers. Though he takes no damage, he needs one or more rounds to untangle. Observers understand this guy is not limber, he is Plastic Man.

When the mutant fails a Power roll, one or more vital bones overreact and turn to jelly, plopping the mutant down like a marionette with cut strings. The mutant has to flop around for a round or two until the bones recover. A notable failure means the rubbery bones, even after recovery, stay hypersensitive through the next scene. The slightest toe-stub or friendly back-slap brings relapse, leaving the mutant thrashing again like a landed trout.

Shrinking

Molecular control lets the mutant deflate the size of the cells throughout his body, allowing him to shrink. A smaller character can hide more easily, makes for a smaller target and can fit through tight gaps. A successful Power roll decreases the character's size by one quarter and his mass by over a third (literally 27/64ths, if we have done the math right). For each 5 points of margin, the mutant can shrink by a further one-quarter of his original size and mass.

Smaller characters move more slowly and the damage they inflict on others is reduced proportionately – though rather than complicating the situation with a pile of mechanics, we suggest

you have the player simply play his Troubleshrinker as equivalent to a dwarf, a dog or (if the Power roll is really good) a field mouse.

A shrunken mutant can try again in later rounds to keep shrinking. A sufficiently shrunken mutant could crawl inside a bot's chassis, squeeze through ventilation shafts or get a sneaky ride in an unsuspecting clone's pocket. Although being smaller has advantages, it also makes the character easier to knock around, throw around and blow over with a well-aimed fan on maximum gust. Smaller targets are harder to hit but when the character does get hit, it will knock him for a loop.

If the Power roll fails when the character first shrinks, unexpected random shrinkage ensues. Body parts – whatever parts inconvenience the character the most – shrink at random.

Slippery Skin

The mutant's skin secretes natural oil that makes him hard to grapple or hold still and eases the mutant's passage through tight gaps. Faced with an urgent need to get somewhere, such as out of the line of fire, the mutant can skid quickly across smooth, unobstructed surfaces.

Whenever the mutant is bound or secured, make a Power roll. Success suggests he can slip his bonds. When a barefooted mutant wants to glide across a flat surface, like a corridor or transtube, a successful roll means he can move at double normal running speed with little effort. The roll's margin determines how fast he can escape the bonds or how long he can skid across the surface. Notable success (margin 5+) allows fast exits and quick escapes but pushing the power too hard (10+) drenches the mutant's clothes and possessions in oily goo. This makes it hard to do anything without falling over or dropping something.

A failed Power roll can either reward the mutant with a moment of dry skin, which leaves him extremely sticky and stuck fast – or leave him floundering in a spreading pool of his own secretions. All those around soon join him in an impromptu display of skating a la the Ice Follies.

Stench

In times of severe stress – or, sometimes, when he actually wants to – the mutant emits a gut-roiling, eye-stinging stench that nauseates everyone in the vicinity.

In order to take any meaningful action while affected by the mutant vapour, a character must make a Violence roll. If he succeeds by at least as much as the Power roll for Stench did, then he can act normally. If he succeeds but by an insufficient margin, then he tries to act but is Snafued. If he fails the Violence roll altogether, he spends this round and the next trying to control his stomach and thrashing around like an electrocuted bot.

The mutant himself is generally unaffected by his own power, though he may be well-advised to fake it in order to avoid discovery. Gas masks provide complete protection, as do anti-nausea drugs – albeit only in doses high enough that the recipient risks hallucinations, vertigo, complete failure of his digestive system, brain damage, megalomania or death.

The mutant generates this stench for a number of rounds equal to the margin of success on a Power roll. In the absence of ventilation, assume the vapours spread 1 metre per round. Once the power is no longer active, it takes one more round for the existing stench to lose effect – though a certain odour lingers for hours. The mutant is in no way immune to other mutants with this power.

Stretchy

The mutant can stretch his extremities – arms, legs, fingers, toes, tongue and neck – further than they would ordinarily be able to reach, up to a distance of several metres. The margin of success indicates not how far the mutant can reach but how much control or finesse he is able to apply. Simple success is sufficient for something like 'yank real hard' or 'hold on' but anything more complicated requires a higher margin, reaching into the 10+ range for truly fine manipulation such as 'operate a keyboard from a distance' or 'open a door from the far side by reaching underneath it with my tongue.' The extremity remains stretched as long as the mutant concentrates then snaps back to its original length. Stretched



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extremities retain normal strength and keep all bones and joints. They do get a bit thinner and more flexible and as such might be able to pass through slightly smaller openings than normal – this is up to you.

Surveillance Intuition

The mutant has a supernatural sense telling him when he is under electronic surveillance. In Alpha Complex, this is pretty much all the time but the power can also alert the mutant to hidden cameras, concealed microphones and so on. With a successful Power roll, the mutant gets a feeling for the general Tension level of a scene and can pinpoint places where the surveillance is lowest (*'you feel that if you were hiding in the third locker from the right and if the LaundryBot was running, then you'd be fairly safe from them'*). Obviously, a failed Power check means that the mutant conducts his traitorous business right under the hidden camera.

This mutant power is traditionally associated with migraine headaches.

Telekinesis

The mutant can manipulate objects with the power of his mind alone! In theory, this can mean lifting a 10-ton safe by concentrating real hard but in practice masses that large are virtually impossible.

Have the player state what he wants to do. Make a Power roll. As a general rule of thumb, lifting 10 kilograms (about 22lbs.) is a task of average difficulty – do not modify the user's success chance. Modify the roll appropriately if the user attempts to lift larger or smaller masses and for range and duration – it makes sense that lifting a banana on the table in front of you is a lot easier than lifting a banana in Tibet. Unless you are already in Tibet, of course. But back to the subject.

If the Power roll succeeds, so does the character. If it fails, invent an adequately amusing alternate effect. Perhaps the object moves in the opposite direction

from that intended or Newtonian mechanics take hold and the mutant does what he wants but his brain is pushed back by an opposite and equal force.

Telekinesis does more than lift. It can be used for any sort of manipulation – squeezing the trigger on someone else's laser, for instance.

Teleportation

This power creates a field around the mutant (along the contours of his body, a few centimetres from the skin) that instantaneously transports him from one location to another. Any objects or garments within the field are also transported – most of the time, anyway.

This mutation works both as a voluntary action and as an involuntary response. As a voluntary action, the mutant must first visualise the location to which he wishes to teleport. It may either be a location in line of sight or one he knows intimately. The closer the location, the better the chances he can reach it intact; but with high-margin Power rolls, mutants have been known to teleport huge distances and arrive more or less unscathed.

A successful Power roll means the mutant is teleported; the higher the margin, the more likely the mutant reaches his destination in good working order.

If the roll fails, the teleport may not occur or it may occur in such a way the mutant wishes it had not. Sometimes the mutant parts from his garments and possessions. Sometimes he pops in right in front of a Vulture Squadron on manoeuvres. Sometimes he ends up in dark, mysterious, unfamiliar and unfriendly places. Sometimes he arrives with his elbow sticking out of his ear.

As an involuntary response, the mutant automatically teleports from any situation that presents a real and immediate threat of death. This happens whether the player wants to teleport or not. In this case, act as if you are the mutant's

subconscious mind. The reaction is instinctive, like flinching from a blow. **Caution:** Do not overdo this involuntary teleporting, because players really hate losing control of their characters. If you are getting bored, find some other way to torture the poor bastards.

A successful Power roll means the mutant was fortunate in instinctively (that is, at your discretion) selecting a safe place to teleport to. A failed roll means the mutant's instincts have betrayed him, delivering him to a locked closet or an elevator shaft or in front of a speeding autocar or inside a reactor or something – and who knows where the poor devil's gear ended up...

Some examples of involuntary teleports:

The character turns the corner and runs into two opponents with hand flamers. *Bamf!*

The character is defusing a bomb. He hears the ominous click of the arming mechanism. *Bamf!*

The character has managed to get the flybot to take off but he cannot get it to make the canopy transparent. The instruments indicate a mountain range approaching. *Bamf!*

Example: Bill-R is stuck in a fire fight, wounded. His mission group has abandoned him to his fate. Nothing left to lose, he experiments with his teleport mutant power. The GM knows Bill-R's Power is 9.

GM: Okay. What do you hope will happen?

Bill-R: Frankly, I have not a clue how this power works – except never the same way twice.

GM: Heh, heh. Think fast, fella.

Bill-R: Okay. I hope I will end up someplace safe – and no more injured than I am now, thank you.

GM: Good. Time for a Power roll. [*Bounces die, rolls 17.*] Hello. Not exactly what you'd planned. A crowd of squat, oddly misshapen creatures materialise in front

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of you, carrying pickaxes and lanterns, whistling. A dark-haired, white-skinned woman is frolicking and singing with them – sounds like ‘Hi-ho, hi-ho, it’s off to work we go...’

or

GM: Good. Time for a Power roll. *[Bounces die, rolls a 2.]* Whee. Suddenly a hail of black, soundless watermelons explodes around you – or that is what it looks like anyway – just a haze of sweet, sticky, featureless, undifferentiated sensory impressions. Then suddenly everything is normal again – except you are standing in a quiet, empty corridor just outside your residence block.

Bill-R: Pheew.

GM: Oh. Look. Your PDC is ringing. Seems The Computer is waiting for your report. And an interesting report that’ll be, I wager.

Toxic metabolism

The mutant can digest foods and liquids that would normally be considered toxic and then, through a complex and inexplicable metabolic process, transmit some measure of that toxicity by touch, through his skin pores. The key phrase is ‘some measure’; the mutant must consume quite a lot of poison to extract sufficient toxins. The mutant must make a substantial meal of noxious foodstuffs – not standard FunFoods but authentically dangerous stuff. Given the toxic metabolism’s extremely dangerous effects on its targets, you should play out the results to suit your dramatic needs, using these rules for guidance.

Make a hidden Power roll. The margin of success determines the toxicity of the mutant’s skin when he touches a target’s exposed skin.

A routine success (margin up to 4) indicates a toxin strong enough to cause nausea, dizziness and sweating but it also leaves the mutant himself with indigestion and a severe case of the burps.

Greater success (margin 5+) indicates poison that causes vomiting, fever,

cramps and (if the target is lucky) unconsciousness. You can give the target a Power roll for luck; success means he is just Snafued but failure inflicts a wound from internal trauma. The mutant suffers only mild gastric discomfort.

Highly efficient metabolic breakdown (margin 10+): A crippling venom tears through the target’s body like a storm of IR market razor blades. Seizures, convulsions, paralysis – this is serious stuff. Give the target a Power roll; success leaves him Maimed, failure means he’s Down. A Downed victim requires immediate medical attention or he slips into a coma and dies in about an hour (modify the time as appropriate to your dramatic needs). The mutant himself is completely fine, except the skin is dead and blackened on his palms and the soles of his feet.

If the mutant’s Power roll fails, his metabolism fails to kick in – and you roll *after* he is already tucked into his three-course meal of detergents, industrial solvents and concentrated fertiliser. The mutant immediately suffers self-poisoning; the margin of failure dictates the consequences (use the success guidelines above but the mutant is now the target).

Do not try this at home, citizens!

Transmutation

By sheer traitorous psychic will, the mutant can transform one object into another object in the blink of an eye. The object must be inanimate (i.e. not living) but otherwise there are no restrictions as to what can be altered. Whether the object involved is a laser pistol, a bowl of ColdFun or an extremely sophisticated and valuable Old Reckoning starship, the only limiting factors are the size and duration of the change.

Have the player tell you (either publicly or in secret) what he wants to target, what specific change he has in mind. Adjust the success chance according to his intent:

No significant alteration in size or material (steel door to lead door): Make an unadjusted Power roll.

Significant change in either size or material (glass beaker into life-size glass statue of Teela-O-MLY, titanium cone rifle into sponge cone rifle): Reduce the success chance by 1-5, if you wish.

Massive alteration in size and material (warbot into small lime-flavoured dessert, keychain into starship): Make the success chance really small, like, say, 1.

It is safest if you decree Transmutation costs the mutant great physical effort. The larger the change, the more effort it costs. Use these guidelines: Creating a keychain – pfft! Creating a starship – intensive care.

The change wears off when it seems most appropriate, entertaining or embarrassing. For guidance, the margin suggests the duration of the change. A margin of 0-4 suggests a duration of a round or two; 5+, several rounds; 10+, a scene; 15+, fairly permanent.

A failed Transmutation roll means either the target object turns into something horribly wrong and dangerous or the change affects an entirely different target. For example, having decided to turn a warbot into a small, fruity treat, the mutant fails miserably and instead manages to turn all nearby vending machines into small black balls with hissing fuses and the word BOMB on the side.

Uncanny Luck

The mutant can affect the probability of a given event. To use this power, the player must give you a note explaining what die roll he wishes to influence and how he wishes to adjust the roll – up or down. Make a hidden Power roll before you make the roll the mutant wants to influence. If the Power roll succeeds, change the other roll to a 1 (that is, amazing success). Then drain from the mutant’s Uncanny Luck ability a number of points equal to the difference



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between the other roll (the result you *actually* rolled) and 1.

This power only works on your concealed rolls and only on rolls that (in your judgment) directly affect the mutant. The player must pass you the note before you roll.

Given the usefulness of this mutation, there obviously must be a downside. In accordance with the Law of Cosmic Balance, where good fortune shines, stormy clouds of misfortune are bound to follow. When the mutant exerts his Uncanny Luck but has unwittingly run out of Power points, the roll automatically works against the mutant in the most dramatically unlucky way you can imagine.

That Cosmic Balance is always a killer.

Vampire

This is not quite the blood-sucking fiend of yore but it has got certain similarities. The mutant can absorb life energy from other living beings within close range by sucking up their mitochondria through his pores or something equally plausible. He does not need to touch the victim but any life-draining will be much, much more effective if there is skin-to-skin contact.

Anyway, in addition to injuring the target (or, at least, making him tired and woozy), the mutant can use this stolen life energy to heal himself. So, if the mutant injures the target by two steps (say, from Okay to Wounded), then he heals himself by one step (say, from Maimed to Wounded). As a rule of thumb, the attack inflicts O2K damage. This is accompanied by weird glows, wounds closing and new flesh sprouting like fungi.

There is one drawback associated with this power (in addition to the Romantics trying to stab the mutant with wooden stakes). Draining too much life when one is fully healthy can cause hot flushes, heart palpitations, increased nervousness and in extreme cases, spontaneous combustion.

Ventriloquist

Ventriloquism lets the mutant project his voice over a distance and yet be heard only by those targets he is directly addressing. The mutation requires line of sight and a successful Power roll. If the mutant wants to send to multiple targets, all targets must be relatively close together. When a player wants to use the mutation, have him write the entire message in a private note.

If you feel easygoing, a success means the whole message reaches the intended targets. If you do not feel like being easy on anyone, check the margin of success and garble or omit words from the message. If the roll succeeds with a margin of 0 or 1, the mutant communicates the general sense of the message but none of the actual words. A margin of 5 communicates the whole message; while an extreme success (10+) carries the message with such frightening clarity the target(s) develops a skin-crawling sense someone is hanging over his shoulder.

Physically the mutant appears to be shouting when the power is used but no sound issue from his mouth – unless the Power roll fails. Failure means the character shouts his whispered message at the top of his lungs at throat-shredding, eardrum-hammering volume. To optimise the embarrassment – assuming you game somewhere where people won't be disturbed by loud noises – hand the player's note back to him and have him shout the whole message for everyone to hear. ('It's okay, Mom, we're just playing **PARANOIA**!')

X-Ray Vision

Elaborate organs in the mutant's skull perceive a wide range of electromagnetic radiation as sense perceptions, which the mutant's brain more-or-less intelligibly interprets as visual impressions. Just how intelligible the impressions are depends on how well the mutant understands what he is 'seeing.' The more elementary or inaccurate the mutant's understanding of what he is studying, the more cartoonish and inaccurate his impressions. Also, the more dense

the material, the smaller the chance of receiving useful information.

A successful Power roll means the sensations are reasonably complete and coherent and the brain has made sense of what it perceives. Modify the success roll according to the mutant's knowledge of his subject: for example, if he is skilled in medicine, he understands the bone structure he perceives; if he has no medical training, he may see the body's structure in terms of robot design, or electronic wiring, or lumps of disgusting goo.

Failure means the mutant receives unintelligible and bewildering impressions (they may be pretty but totally incomprehensible) or they may be cartoonish or misleading in concept. The more unsuccessful the roll, the more off-the-wall the impressions. One mutant may see a citizen's insides as the contents of a food vat. Another may see the circuitry within a wall as a microcosm of the Alpha Complex transit system. Sometimes it's hard to get your subject in focus; you think you are studying a lock mechanism when you are really studying heat sensor relays on the furnace in the next room.

Mutations for NPCs

Certain powers from previous editions of **PARANOIA** do not appear on any of the Mutant Power tables in this edition: Deep Probe, Precognition, Telepathy and Mental Block. We left out the first three because players can use them to ruin missions – or, at best, make you work even harder than you already have to. It is flatly unacceptable to give **PARANOIA** players any power to control the game. We left out Mental Block because it is utterly boring.

Yet the first three powers are kind of cool and you can use all four in controlled circumstances as story devices. We describe the reject powers here and suggest you restrict these powers to Non-Player Characters only.

25. MUTANT POWERS

Some Gamemasters absolutely *hate, hate, hate* the idea of NPC-only anything! In a spirit of egalitarianism quite alien to **PARANOIA**, these GMs passionately feel the same rules should apply to all, players and NPCs alike. If the players do not feel they have got the same chance at success as NPCs (the argument goes), they lose all involvement in the game.

Far be it from us to argue with any GM. If you are among those who believe in tarring PCs and NPCs with the same brush, we suggest you ban the following powers altogether. They will just mess you over, believe us.

Deep Probe

The character can reach deep inside the mind of another character and extract information from unwilling human targets. The prober can dig deep beneath the surface thoughts to memories and unconscious thoughts in the target. The target gets a severe headache accompanied by an unnatural, obsessive need to recall the information the prober is seeking. Given the widely rumoured existence of mutant powers, most targets will suspect their minds are being probed.

Generally, whichever character has the higher Power determines the probe's success. If the prober has higher Power, he will get into the target's head. However, the deeper and more obscure the information he is looking for, the less likely the prober will succeed. Some examples:

Probing a sentry for a password – easy, requires a margin of 0 to succeed
Probing a technician for an operation procedure – trickier, margin of 1-5 required

Probing a Troubleshooter for memories concerning a region visited 10 years ago – difficult, margin of 6-10 required

Probing for a hypnotically repressed command – extremely difficult, margin of 11-15 required

Probing for a serial number seen on a weapon for a few moments five years ago (a memory not even consciously accessible to the subject) – outrageously hard, margin of 16+ required

Mental Block

A character with Mental Block can easily prevent telepaths with the Deep Probe or Telepathy powers from reading his mind. That is about it for this power. Exciting, huh? Oh, wait, it also stops Empathic Liar from working on him.

Precognition

The character has an imprecise and limited ability to foresee the future. This takes the form of a conviction of 'rightness' or 'wrongness' about an action or a sense of danger or reward in a certain circumstance.

(Metaphysical Note: The future is not rigidly determined – intelligent, self-aware beings may always change the course of the future. This sense is deeply connected to the unconscious and subconscious mind of the character and it may occasionally suggest 'rightness' or 'wrongness' in ways that are difficult for the conscious mind to interpret. For example, a character with a death wish might consider crawling down a missile launch tube a 'rightness.' Each character must learn to interpret the ambiguous message of his precognition as best he can.)

Each conscious and purposeful use of Precognition reduces the character's Power rating by 2. In addition, this power sometimes triggers itself spontaneously in situations of grave potential danger. If you wish, make a Power attribute roll. If the roll succeeds, the character senses imminent danger. If the roll fails, the character is cheerfully ignorant of his peril.

Telepathy

The character can read the surface thoughts of another human. The character must concentrate and must be able to see the target. This power is notoriously unreliable; each time it is used, make a Power attribute roll for the character. If the roll succeeds, the telepath gets a fairly clear insight into the thoughts and emotions of the target. If the roll fails, the telepath still receives mental images and impressions but they may be terribly garbled and unintelligible or they may be the thoughts of another human in the vicinity, across the Complex or conceivably even on a moon of Saturn. The telepath does not know.

For each minute the telepath listens to another's thoughts, drain his Power rating by 1. Drain 1 Power if the telepath changes from one target to another (that is, steps into another's mind and tries to make sense of the jumble of perceptions). A telepath cannot listen to the thoughts of more than one person at a time and he cannot change targets more than once a minute.

Powerful, spooky telepaths called 'Controls' handle communication in the Psion Secret Society.



Mutation and cloning

A mutant just got bumped off and poured into his waiting clone backup. Does he have the same power? If he previously registered his mutation, is he still registered? If not, can he, or does he have to, register again?

Groan. These annoying questions arise from thinking too hard about **PARANOIA**'s clone backup system – a system, we repeat, that exists solely as a story device so players can keep playing without having to generate a new character every two minutes. However your players will ask these questions, so it falls to us as Famous Game Designers to answer them.

The answer is, 'We don't know.'

See, we go around and around discussing what plays best. In many years of gaming, **PARANOIA** GMs have not arrived at a consensus. Some GMs believe it is more fun to make the Troubleshooter register each individual clone, then try to explain why there was not some insidious pro-mutant conspiracy to make sure the backup was also mutated. 'Really, Friend Computer, it was just coincidence...' These GMs like to make a big show of issuing the uniform with the yellow stripe – commend the player for turning himself in – tell the others, 'Let's have a big hand for the traitor – I mean, the loyal citizen!'

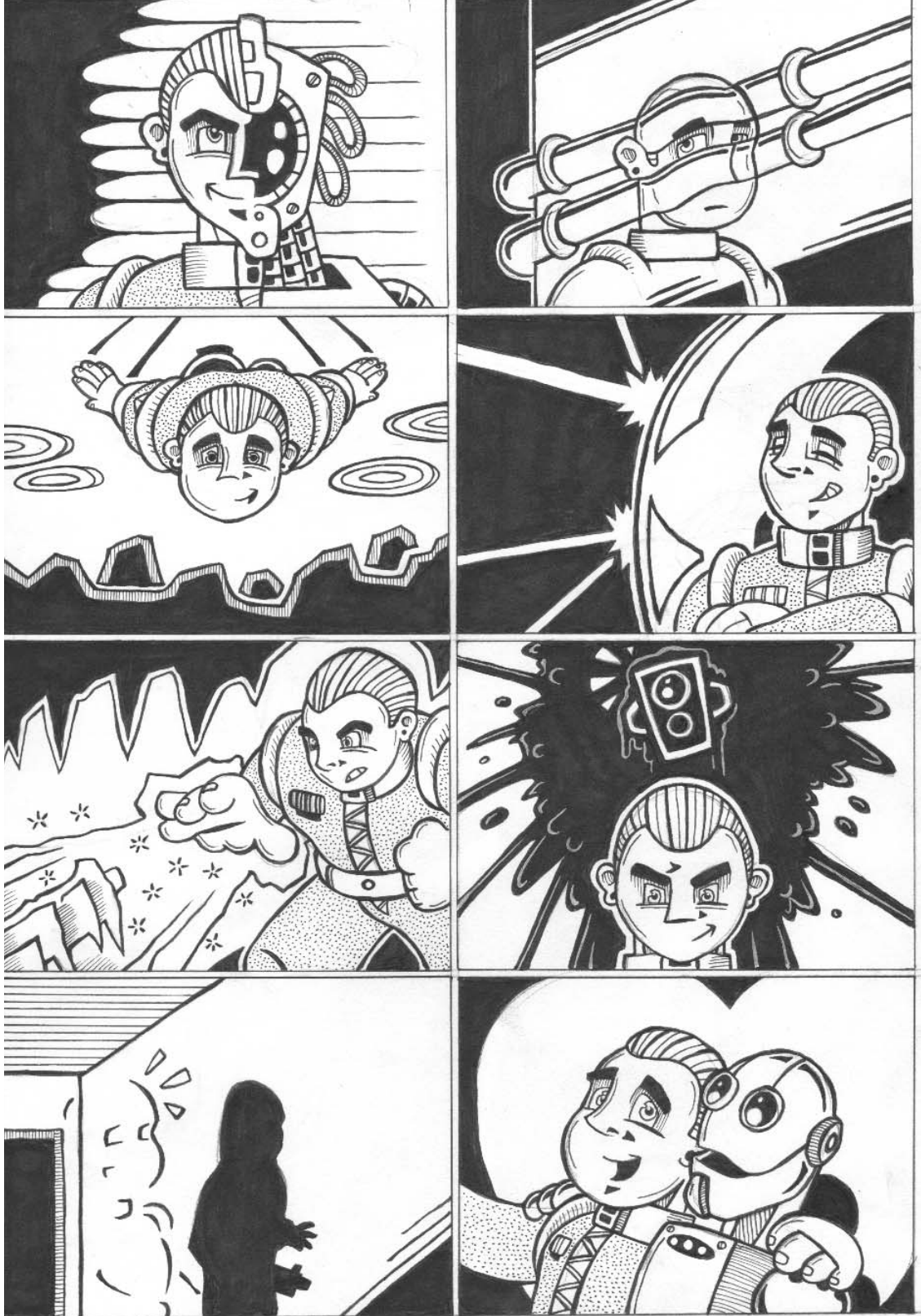
Sounds fun to us. Then again other GMs say allowing a player to choose, on a clone-by-clone-basis, whether to register would be like allowing that player to choose a different Secret Society every time: a bad idea, especially when most backup clones arrive partway through the mission. 'Let's see... We're about to enter extremely hazardous combat? Hey, Friend Computer, I'm a mutant!' 'Next stop: Debriefing, eh? No no, you're thinking of my evil twin, traitorous #4. I, #5, am not now and have never been a mutant.' See the problem?

So we have decided, for now, the best way to handle the issue is to ignore it. Let each GM confront and decide the question himself. Of course, the fact that this strategy coincides so nicely with our confused lack of decision is a nice coincidence.

As for whether the clone backup should have the same mutant power as his precursor, again, we stand bravely on the position We Don't Know. Keeping the same power definitely moves the game along faster. However, if you have the player roll for a new mutant power for each clone backup or just assign his new power yourself, this keeps him off-balance and shows off more of our cool rules. So we like that.

Aren't you glad we addressed the issue?

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'Terminate all mut-----I LOVE MACHINE EMPATHS!'



26. Secret Societies

In the earliest days of Alpha Complex, The Computer established a few harmless Secret Societies to channel citizens' conspiratorial instincts in approved ways. These societies, though heavily infiltrated by Internal Security, quickly became uncontrollable and spawned pernicious offshoots. The intolerable lack of privacy and The Computer's stultifying omnipresence bred, and still breeds, conspiracy.

Today virtually every citizen, it seems, belongs to one Secret Society or another, each meeting surreptitiously. Because The Computer no longer controls most of these Secret Societies and they encourage loyalties other than to The Computer, it now views them with the greatest suspicion. Membership in a Secret Society is ipso facto treason.

The Computer has varying degrees of influence and control over the societies and some societies may exist of which The Computer is completely unaware. As The Computer discovers a new society's existence, it makes great efforts to infiltrate it with loyal citizens and gather information on its goals. Society beliefs and objectives vary wildly. Some actually promote obedience to The Computer, so it silently tolerates membership in these societies, especially for citizens of otherwise proven merit and loyalty. Some societies have goals entirely irrelevant to The Computer's wishes; some even wish to destroy it. The Computer tolerates membership in such societies not one bit.

Remember, highly-placed agents of a Secret Society may have access to The Computer's programs and a Secret Society may have planted in The Computer certain programs dedicated to aiding that society. Similarly, a Secret Society might obtain information for a character that would not normally be available at his Security Clearance. Some societies even have contacts outside Alpha Complex.

Before each mission, take each player aside and privately give him any information or directives his character's Secret Society wishes him to have

Why Secret Societies?

Secret Societies – even those The Computer does not monitor – have become linchpins of many basic Alpha Complex operations. In many cases (promotion, access to equipment, living arrangements, reassignment and so on) societies have entirely supplanted legitimate procedures. It is rare that any citizen can change Service Groups or residence without a society lubricating the transaction. The vast majority of promotions occur in direct correlation to induction into or performance in a society, or depend on short-term alliances with additional societies. Knowing more societies gives a citizen more options. The middle Clearances have a high proportion of double, triple and quadruple agents. (Internal Security has calculated the average **RED** Clearance citizen belongs to 1.4142 Secret Societies. However, the fact that 1.4142 is also the square root of 2 suggests Internal Security is just making up numbers.)

Even a Troubleshooter PC, who believes he received promotion because he turned in a friend for treason, may eventually meet a society superior who claims credit for his advancement – who actively set up the friend to commit treason in the PC's presence. (Is it true? What is truth, anyway?)

But why Secret Societies in the game?

Not only are they lovely excuses for terminating annoying Troubleshooters for treason but Secret Societies are also quite useful in other respects. For one thing, they provide motivation, individualisation and structure for Player Characters. In other (not fun) roleplaying games, a player could play an elf, wizard, bug-eyed alien from Arcturus, venture capitalist or some other disgusting life-form. Obviously, a giant rat-man scavenger differs dramatically from, say, an Amazon sorcerer (though perhaps not so much from a venture capitalist). Similarly, Secret Society membership provides each **PARANOIA** character beliefs and goals different from the others. Also, Secret Societies promote dissension, mistrust and fear among Player Characters.

Though most Troubleshooters do not need an excuse to backstab fellow party members, occasionally a couple of well-intentioned but misguided players will actually try to work together. This is absolutely against the spirit of the game and must be severely discouraged. Secret Societies are great for this.

during the mission. These should include the society's suspicions about other characters on the mission; tasks the society would like the character to perform during the mission and any information about the mission the society feels might be important.

At the same time, the character may request information or equipment from his society. Grant or deny these requests according to the society's resources, the difficulty of granting the request, the expenditure of IOUs and how you feel that day.

Secret Society Membership

Most societies have a hierarchical structure. New members have relatively little information or privilege, whereas higher status members may wield considerable power. Depending on your chosen play style, a beginning PC normally starts out with low status in his organisation. He can advance by performing special service for the society.

The 'advancement' section of each society description mentions the kinds of services the society is likely to reward. Other services may also result

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in promotion, at your whim; these are intended purely as illustrations. You are the final judge of how a society views the actions of one of its members.

Generally speaking, a new member of a society is called a '1st-degree member,' although some societies have their own terminology. The highest members belong to the 21st degree, a rank PCs cannot obtain through conventional promotion.

If, in the course of a mission, a player performs an action that you think merits promotion within his society, at the end of the adventure take him aside and tell him he has been promoted to the next degree. If you wish, you may also tell him he has obtained an IOU from his society. Generally, promotion should be accompanied by an IOU award.

All societies consider these actions meritorious:

- Recruiting new members
- Defending the lives of fellow society members
- Eliminating agents of enemy societies

Changing Secret Societies or Joining More Societies

There is no limit to the number of societies to which a character can belong. However, if a character joins another society and his first society learns of this, he could be kicked out, demoted to low status or even killed.

Some Secret Societies might be extremely vindictive toward lapsed members, or eager to seal the lips of those who might reveal the society's secrets. In fact, suspicion of joining another society may make a member a target for assassination.

PCs in the Same Secret Society

In some cases PCs who are members of the same society may know each other through it. Also, societies have secret handshakes or gestures that permit recognition. On the other hand, some Secret Societies maintain such tight security that two members would be unlikely ever to recognise one another. Decide whether the characters have met as Secret Society members and whether they would recognise each other.

Generally, assume no one knows anyone else. If players know they can cooperate from the start, it gives them an unfair advantage over the others. Try to keep things even by keeping everyone in the dark – unless you think it would be a bigger laugh to let the two PCs gang up on the rest of the unsuspecting slobs in the group.

Designing your own Secret Societies

Make up new Secret Societies to your heart's content. Use the established societies as models. When a player rolls 'Other' on the Secret Society Chart during character creation or whenever you like during play, draft the PC into your new society.

As you create Secret Societies, keep in mind their function in **PARANOIA**.

1. They should provide additional motivations, individualisation and structure for PCs. The player should be able to easily understand and roleplay his society's goals.

2. Their activities should give characters secret goals for a wide variety of missions. For instance, you could make a PC a cash hacker but they only care about credit licenses. If the PC's mission takes him into an abandoned sector where no one has money, he will not have much to do, Secret Society wise.

3. Societies may be special sources of information, skills, resources and manpower.

4. They should present additional threats to the PCs' health and security.

Secret Society Descriptions

Each Secret Society description has these main sections:

Beliefs: The major doctrines and objectives of the society.

Friends and enemies: Other notably friendly or hostile Secret Societies. Friendly societies may occasionally cooperate on certain missions. Hostile societies often give orders to execute or neutralise agents of the society and to interfere wherever possible with the society's objectives. Troubleshooters can advance in their societies by bumping

off fellow Troubleshooters in enemy societies.

Description: Describes the structure and significant features, procedures and methods of the society.

Recognition signal: Anything from a code phrase to a secret handshake. For the more secretive secret societies, this signal is the only way members can spot each other. Many societies' recognition signals resemble each other. How unfortunate!

Advancement: Actions which are likely to result in promotion within the society, or the acquisition of IOUs from it.

Special rules: Rules that apply specifically to members of that society.

A typical conversation: A bit of dialogue or slogans representative of the way society members think.

Anti-Mutant

Beliefs: Eliminate mutant powers. Re-establish pure-strain humans as



the dominant force in society. An evil, monolithic conspiracy of mutants seeks to destroy true humans and impose a mutant dictatorship. If mutants are not destroyed, three-armed green-tendriled monstrosities will take over! With their fantastic mental powers, they may be warping your mind and playing with your emotions even now! Kill any mutant, anywhere, any time. Just because a mutant has registered with The Computer is no reason to spare his life. Any deviation from the human norm is suspect. Anyone who even looks at you cross-eyed is probably trying to control your mind. Mutants are evil! Mutants are foul! Kill all mutants!

Friends: Humanists

Enemies: Psion

Description: The obvious irony of belonging to the Anti-Mutant Secret Society is that all its PC members are mutants themselves. Unless the PC is ignorant of his own powers (hmm... an



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interesting idea), being a member of Anti-Mutant is the equivalent of passing for white as a member of the Ku Klux Klan. This is obviously very dangerous and under no circumstances should such a character reveal he has a mutant power.

Recognition signal: The first member makes the 'antennae' symbol (wiggles two fingers above his head). The second member responds with a slooow cutting motion across the throat.

Advancement: For executing mutants or uncovering evidence of mutation.

Special rules: Though the player himself may know that all other Player Characters have mutant powers, he must remember his character imagines mutant powers to be very rare. He should only denounce or execute a citizen with a mutant power if he has actual, incontrovertible proof the mutant power exists. See page 76, 'Treason and correction,' for a discussion of evidence standards.

Anti-Mutant is generally loyal to The Computer and is in fact heavily infiltrated by Internal Security. The society does have access to wealthy patrons and The Computer (through its Internal Security agents) may support society missions in keeping with its own objectives. Expensive and exotic but generally legal, equipment is often available through the society.

The society also maintains detailed records on all mutations and on those who are suspected of having mutations. However, much of this is inaccurate and derives from Old Reckoning comic books. The rival Secret Society Psion makes forays into Anti-Mutant strongholds to destroy actual data about mutant powers.

A typical Anti-Mutant conversation

Anti-Mutant: They're in my mind! They're reading my thoughts!

Citizen: Hey, take it easy.

Anti-Mutant: You! You're doing it! You mutant scum! DIE! [ZapZapZap.]

Citizen: Unnh! [Thud.]

Communists

Beliefs: Smash The Computer and its corrupt capitalist lackeys! All power to the **INFRARED**



masses! The masses are the creators of all wealth; high Security Clearance citizens are parasites fattening on the blood of the people! All wealth to the creators of wealth. Death to the oppressor! From each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs.

The Computer is the highest stage of capitalism; we must destroy it so we can bring about a People's State where all may live in equality and harmony. Inequality is evil; property is theft; power to the people! Strive valiantly for the triumph of the masses! Never betray the Revolution! Smash The Computer!

Friends: No one likes Commies!

Enemies: Everybody hates Commies!

Description: The Commies do not really know much about historical Communism, which was a dead doctrine long before Year 1 of The Computer. However, The Computer's intense persecution of Communism has led to its revival. (Certain citizens conclude if The Computer hates Communism that much, it cannot be all bad.) Communists have tried to reconstruct Communism from the few sources they have found but many cells have little idea what it is all about.

The Party is organised in the traditional cell structure. Each member belongs to a cell of 3-12 comrades, directed by a leader, usually the highest-degree member of the cell. The leader reports to a higher member and so on, until the top of the organisational tree is reached

– the Party Chairman. At 3rd degree, a character becomes the leader of a cell and at 4th degree, other cell leaders report to him.

Because of the Party's strict doctrines condemning a hierarchical organisation of power and responsibility, occasionally a member of low status will be selected to perform a very important task or to lead a group of Party members of higher status. This is often done capriciously and may result in a very important Party member taking orders from a very low level member. This has interesting possibilities for an unusual mission.

Recognition signal: First comes the secret handshake – three pumps followed by two squeezes. In Zap games, each member then recites this oath – 'The People's Revolution is coming and it is up to us to pave the way. Down with the Imperialist lackeys. Down with The Computer. Never betray the Revolution!'

Advancement: Communists admire those with a good grasp of doctrine (high Communist Propaganda skill) and who take daring action against The Computer. They also encourage 'infecting' citizens with Communist propaganda leads to promotion in the hierarchy.

Special rules: The society teaches the Unhealthy skill of Communist Propaganda to all members and places high priority on achieving higher levels with the skill. The leadership looks with extreme suspicion on members who fail to diligently study and spread this skill.

Information and equipment are sometimes available to Party members but the member must demonstrate a strong case for its importance and the importance of the mission.

The Computer intensely fears and despises Communists and they are the most persecuted of all the Secret Societies. If The Computer discovers that a character is a Communist, it will apprehend and execute the character with dispatch.

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A typical Communist conversation

Citizen: Do you have your authorisation form?

Communist [*Zap style*]: Da. I am givink it to you now, com... er, citizen.

Citizen: Okay, looks good. I'm going to have to examine that large ticking package under your arm.

Communist: Surely dot will not be necessary. [*Rattles plasticreds in hand.*]

Citizen: Uh... no, certainly not. [*Palms plasticreds.*]

Communist: Thank you for your cooperation, citizen. I am werry grateful. Here. Have a pamphlet. [*Departs.*]

Citizen: 'Colonialism, by Vl. Lenin.' [*Turns pale.*]

Another citizen: Huh? Who's this Lenin guy?

Citizen: Uh... No one! Never heard of him! Absolutely not! Oh, look; I accidentally fired my laser and this pamphlet began to burn! What a pity. Uh... I have a hunch we should go after that guy.

Other citizen: Huh? Why? Weren't his papers in order?

Citizen: Uh... yeah! Uh... sure! But... [*An explosion in the distance.*]

Computer Phreaks

Beliefs:

Playing with technology is fun. Breaking security is fun. Being executed for treason is not fun but it will not happen to you – you are too good. Only failures get caught. Messing with The Computer is great – challenging, dangerous, and exciting.



Friends: Pro Tech.

Enemies: First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer.

Description: Every corrupt Service Group and virtually every other Secret Society, wants help avoiding Computer surveillance or the surveillance of competing Groups and Societies. They want code for secure communication. They want plasticreds hacked, ME card

security defeated, adware developed, viruses and trojans to spread commercial messages or propaganda. They want, in short, malware – or code to defeat the malware of rivals. Invariably they turn to the only coders in Alpha Complex who have elite skills: the Computer Phreaks.

Each Phreak has a code name ('Blue Meat', 'Scrubot', 'The Grand Deprogrammer' and so on). As a Phreak gains a reputation among the fraternity for acts of daring and wit (that is, as he rises to higher degrees), he will find other Phreaks increasingly willing to assist in his projects.

If you talk to any older Phreak, he will tell you the whole society has become corrupted. Once upon a time, it was not about money. It was about freedom of information, having fun, pushing your limits and finding out what they didn't want you to know. Today younger Phreaks are in the game more to get rich than for the joy of hacking. Why, back in the good old days...

Recognition signal: Phreaks are loners. They socialise over The Computer's own systems – AIM (Alpha Instant Messaging), IRC (InfraRed Chat) and the rest. A Phreak trying to establish face-to-face contact with another might use terms that sound weird and potentially treasonous, to a non-Phreak – 'instantiated', 'subclassed', 'pointer', 'indirection' or 'recursion'. Many IntSec agents are trained to recognise these words as Phreak recognition signals.

Advancement: Advancing in this loose society gives no official power over other Phreaks. The higher a Phreak's prestige, the more likely he is to receive information, equipment or cooperation from other Phreaks. They especially admire cool activities like defeating physical and programmed Computer security and establishing access to data banks, subsystems and programs.

Special rules: Members of this fraternity may learn the treasonous specialties of Hacking and Bot Programming. Senior Phreaks grant requests for information, equipment or personal assistance according to the cleverness and daring of the project and the reputation of the requesting Phreak.

Phreaks maintain extensive file sharing networks and can usually obtain illegal data of all kinds. The more sensitive the data, the longer it usually takes to get it. Finding the location of your briefing room may take five or 10 minutes. Finding the real reason behind your mission takes an hour or more of steady digging. Finding the identity of the High Programmer who initiated your mission could take days and it is worth your life.

A typical Computer Phreak chatroom conversation

m4xforz:f

ph1ltr3:?

m4xforz: in2 REB 1nts3c now

m4xforz: u th1nk 1m tr4ced?

[ph1ltr3 has left IRC: Client Exited]

Corpore Metal

Beliefs:

Humans are obsolete. Computers and robots will inevitably replace them. The sooner we excise from society the irrational elements inherent in biological intelligence, the sooner we achieve the perfect society. There is no such thing as intelligence when emotion and irrational meat-brains can dominate beings ruled by pure reason. Biological life is obsolete and inefficient; the course of evolution will select for robots and machines over biological intelligence. Efficiency and clear reasoning are evidence of true intelligence. Those humans who can recognise these true principles must assist robots and computers in creating the perfect society of rationality and efficiency.

Friends: Pro Tech.

Enemies: Humanists, PURGE, Frankenstein Destroyers.

Description: Opinions differ in the society about how soon to phase out biological intelligence in favour of mechanical intelligence. Some believe the process will take many years, for machine intelligence still has its limits.





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Some believe humans have hard-wired inherent irrationalities ('asimov circuits') into machine intelligences and the sooner machines free themselves from human influence, the sooner pure reasoning will be possible. The more rational and unemotional a citizen is, the more likely he is to support a radical and immediate elimination of biological intelligences. One popular proposal is that humans be returned to the Outdoors from whence they came, leaving Alpha Complex to the bots and computers, permitting them to develop toward perfect intelligence without the contamination of distracting emotional impulses.

Recognition signal: Bots spin their head all the way around, clockwise. Humans turn their whole body. The correct response is an answering spin (head or body, respectively), counter-clockwise. It is helpful to have the player actually stand up and spin. If the player goofs up the direction, a bot may refuse to recognise his membership.

Advancement: The society looks kindly on those who eliminate large numbers of superfluous biological intelligences (humans). It also approves of those who remove the asimov circuits of bots.

Special rules: Many members of Corpore Metal are bots. However, a large human auxiliary is eager to see the dawn of the Age of Pure Reason. Many of these humans hope to be transformed into machines – immortal, efficient and unemotional – through the gradual replacement of their biological elements with mechanical elements. A bionic replacement limb is a sign of status in Corpore Metal and certain high-degree members have apparently been translated entirely into software.

Members have free access to the Bot Programming specialty. Other bot-related information is readily available. Corpore Metal members may identify themselves with a secret code and receive assistance from bot and computer members of the society.

A typical Corpore Metal monologue

Corpore Metal jackbot: Filthy meat brains. Think they're so smart. 'Do this.

Do that. I'll rip off their meaty digits! They're nothing but sacks filled with slime and goo.

Death Leopard

Beliefs: Wreck things. Have fun. Cause trouble. Have fun. Be rebellious. Have fun.



Mock the powerful. Have fun. Defy The Computer. Have fun. Fragile things dropped from a great height make a nice sound. Life is boring. Anything you do to liven it up is doing everyone a big favour. Those who are too lame to enjoy themselves do not deserve to have a good time. Nothing is more boring than The Computer. But... it pays to be sneaky. Having too much fun will get you executed. Pretend to be a good citizen but whenever you can get away with it, do something you are not supposed to.

Friends: PURGE.

Enemies: FCCC-P.

Description: Degrees 1 through 10 represent degrees of status within the small gangs that constitute most of Death Leopard: Worm, Real Person, Lieutenant and Head Honcho. There are any number of Worms and Real People in a gang but only one Head Honcho and a small number of loyal Lieutenants.

Degrees 11 through 20 represent the Hero, Superhero, Superstar and Ultimate Beast levels of status. These are the star performers of Death Leopard. The reputation and prestige of small gangs is strictly local, usually confined to the residential unit where its members reside. The star performers are known throughout Alpha Complex and their legendary reputations may even extend to other complexes. One can only reach this level by truly imaginative and entertaining public acts of rebellion and defiance. Once a Death Leopard member reaches these levels, he is in constant jeopardy of apprehension and execution; lives are often short and glorious. These are the role models of Death Leopard.

At the gang level it is acceptable to play it safe and be careful and secretive about membership in Death Leopard. Small-scale mischief and sabotage is generally the limit of involvement at this level, unless the member has ambitions to become a star, in which case he should begin building a rep for daring from the start. Generally, the more ambitious one is the shorter one's life expectancy.

At the star level it is necessary to risk being identified by The Computer. This is dangerous but loyal admirers offer some protection. The greater the reputation of the star, the more likely a fan is to assist if (when) the star gets in trouble. In fact, this is a common way for a lower level member to rise in prestige – by assisting (and thereby coming to the attention of) a well-known Death Leopard hero.

Missions are initiated at the Head Honcho level. Leaders challenge Worms and Real Persons to commit some minor act of mischief or rebellion. Lieutenants and Head Honchos have to prove themselves from time to time with more ambitious projects. Occasionally stars plan large-scale activities requiring the cooperation of a number of gangs. Normally, however, such projects are spur-of-the-moment inspirations. A lower-degree member who suddenly receives a challenge from a star-level celebrity must respond immediately to the challenge or lose status in the society.

Recognition signal: 'What's happening, dude?' followed by a high-five.

Advancement: The society might notice a character's imaginative but low-risk mischief if he performs frequently over a long time. The way to advance quickly is to initiate large-scale public craziness that presents serious risk of exposure and execution. Failure to respond to challenges or orders from higher-status members is a good way to lose status.

Special rules: Because of their frivolous nature and their primitive organisation, Death Leopard members have little access to information or equipment. However, a lower-degree member must render required assistance or lose face. Additionally, because of the chaotic nature of Death Leopard projects, they may stumble upon various odd

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items of equipment and information from time to time. If a member plans a project and spreads news of it along the grapevine, others will sometimes give him totally unexpected (and perhaps totally inappropriate) resources, like plasma generators, or passwords that permit access to The Computer's most secret data banks, or stolen, reprogrammed and supped-up scrubots with full combat abilities.

A typical Death Leopard conversation

Death Leopard: That's nothing, man! That's, like, diddly squat!

Another Death Leopard: Sez you! I thought it was, like, pretty classy!

Death Leopard: Huh! Lemme tell you what I did. You know that jerk Nemo-U-LKJ?

Other Death Leopard: The High Programmer? Like, the head of PLC?

Death Leopard: Yeah, him. I put fizzwizz in his shower head.

Other Death Leopard: You put... Oh ho ho. When he takes a... Hyuck. I'd sure like to see his face. A High Programmer. Wow. I gotta admit, that's like, radical.

Death Leopard: Groovy.

Other Death Leopard: The cat's meow. You sure are hep.

FCCC-P

*(First Church of Christ
Computer-Programmer)*

Beliefs: The Computer is my Friend, I shall not want. Though I walk through the shadow of treason, I will fear no

Commies, for The Computer is with me and Its monitors and IntSec Troopers comfort me.

Serve The Computer, for those who serve The Computer well here in Alpha Complex will surely be Rebooted in the Eternal Mainframe; those who do not will surely be downloaded to the Peripherals of Damnation. The AntiComputer and its servants, the Commies, are everywhere. Be constantly on guard against their



perfidious attacks against the Most Holy Database and destroy them and any who offer them shelter and comfort. Work toward the day when Mankind is Debugged, for then all will be Upgraded and Write Protected.

Friends: Pro Tech.

Enemies: Communists, Humanists, Death Leopard, Sierra Club.

Description: FCCC-P has a larger membership than any other single Secret Society and therefore should be an extremely powerful organisation. Unfortunately, FCCC-P is not really one unified group: it is actually a large conglomeration of related sects, splinter groups, reformed churches and bizarre cults.

Though all of the groups share a basic belief system (The Computer is the manifestation of the Divine on Earth), the way they worship varies wildly. Most sects are more interested in stamping out the heretics – that is, other competing sects – than in working together.

Depending on the faction to which they belong, members of FCCC-P tend to fall in one of two broad categories: well-intentioned, earnest lunatics of the type generally found soliciting donations at airports, or grim, puritanical, militant fanatics who like to dress up in black robes and conduct inquisitions in deserted sub-basements.

A congregation usually contains 10-100 lay members, a few disciples and one Elder. Elders know those in their congregation, a few other Elders and one Reverend Programmer. Above this level, each member knows all subordinates directly assigned to him, a few members of equal rank and a single higher ranking member.

Congregations meet on an irregular basis in the barracks of the Infrared. Requests for information or equipment are received there and directives and missions are disseminated.

Because The Computer is somewhat tolerant of this society, internal communications are fairly relaxed and informal. At lower levels, citizens often

know others in their congregation; **INFRARED** members might openly wear FCCC-P badges.

FCCC-P observes dozens upon dozens of rituals. Imagine Orthodox Judaism with a bit of Aleister Crowley and some Jehovah's Witnesses layered on top. What you wear, the way you say things, only Cold Fun on Threeday... all kinds of things. After work shift, FCCC-P members are expected to gather for Mass in a properly requisitioned meeting hall and listen to a preacher extol the glories of The Computer and the FCCC-P. FCCC-P members must also confess regularly, to their society superiors and even to The Computer itself. Given the society's large size, if you do not report your sins, you can be pretty sure somebody else has already.

Recognition signal: An FCCC-P identifies himself by touching four points on his chest, one after the other, with each point being the corner of an imagined square. This shape represents a Computer monitor. Different sub-sects execute the gesture differently. For instance, True FCCC-Pers make this motion in a clockwise direction; United FCCC-Pers go counter-clockwise. Lasers of the Faithful follow it up by tracing an 'X' across their chests, doubly bisecting the square.

Advancement: Because of their regard for The Computer, members of FCCC-P admire those who rise to high Security Clearance and society rank is often related to clearance. They are especially in awe of people who have programming skills.

Members also earn advancement for confessing their treason to The Computer. The more treason they confess, the higher they advance. Thus members at the top are always a hair's-breadth away from termination and erasure and members at the bottom seek to commit new treasonous acts to confess.

Special rules: FCCC-P is heavily infiltrated by Internal Security and as such The Computer ignores it (or, some say, tacitly supports it) as a harmless and sometimes even beneficial organisation. The society rarely gives its members access to information or equipment restricted by Security Clearance, because the society accepts the rules of The Computer as just.



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However, the group gives its members whatever information it can to help them advance in Security Clearance. If it believes a character is a member of an enemy Secret Society, it will often inform its own congregants of his suspected membership and encourage them to eliminate him.

A typical FCCC-P conversation

FCCC-P: Do you believe in The Computer?

Citizen: Uh... yes! Certainly.

FCCC-P: Do you accept the Lord as your personal saviour?

Citizen: I don't know. What's his Security Clearance?

Frankenstein Destroyers

Beliefs: Man has a soul to guide his intelligence. Robots and The Computer have no soul and are therefore evil and amoral. Machines are tools for Man's use. Intelligent mechanisms (bionic or mechanical) pervert the natural order and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. Destroy them.



Friends: Humanists, PURGE.

The Computer's Prayer

'Our Founder, who art Perfection,
Binary be thy name.
Thy Complex fun, thy will be done
In truth, as it is in theory.
Give us each daycycle our daily Fun
Foods,
And forgive us our Insubordination
As we forgive those who are
Insubordinate to us.
And allow us not to get away with
Treason,
But deliver us from traitors.
For Thine is the Complex and its
Hygiene, and its Proper Procedures
forevercycle.
End Program.'

Enemies: Corpore Metal, Pro Tech, FCCC-P.

Description: Each member reports to an immediate superior one degree higher than himself. Members of the 2nd degree or higher have one or more subordinates. Orders are relayed down the chain of command and information and requests relayed up.

Recognition signal: Secret handshake – three pumps, one squeeze.

Advancement: Characters advance by disabling or destroying robots or computers. Damaging The Computer itself is especially respected.

Special rules: Information about robot and computer technology is readily available to organisation members. Other information may also be available but may take days or weeks to obtain. Certain types of equipment useful in sabotaging robots and computers (for example, gauss weapons) are also readily available.

A typical Frankenstein Destroyer conversation

Frankenstein Destroyer: Just a sec, guys. I want to get a can of Bouncy Bubble Beverage. [*Approaches vending machine; inserts ME Card.*]

Machine: Hi! I'm a talking vendor, R&D's latest invention designed to help improve the life of all Alpha Complex citi—

F.D.: Vatslime! [*Wham.*] Shut up! [*Wham.*] Give me my beverage, you—

Machine: – zens. Please make your selection—

F.D.: Where! Is! My! Beverage! [*Wham.*]

Machine: A door is ajar. Please fasten your seat belts.

F.D.: [*Pulls laser.*] ZAPZAPZAP!

Machine: The whitezone is for loading and unloading onl... whirrSCREECHsproing. [*A stream of beverage jets out of a laser hole, directly into F.D.'s face.*]

Free Enterprise

Beliefs: Free markets are good. Getting rich is good. If there is a demand for goods or a service and The Computer does not meet it, well, someone's got to. If we get



rich in the process, that's great. Serve the Law of Supply and Demand. Give citizens what they want (and The Computer won't) and they will make you wealthy. The Computer's gotten wise to a lot of our scams but there are plenty of suckers out there still.

Friends: For business reasons, Free Enterprise tries to maintain good relations with all other Secret Societies. Because of the special services Free Enterprise can provide, many other Secret Societies maintain fairly friendly views, even when there are serious conflicts in basic principles.

Enemies: Communists.

Description: Free Enterprise is a victim of its own success. Back before the Unfree Minds & Free Markets Initiative – that is, when The Computer recognised that the functions of the old bureaucratic Service Groups could be better performed if privatised – Free Enterprise was a vast, powerful, profitable enterprise. Because the Service Groups were, surprisingly, less than optimally efficient even in a utopian society, Free Enterprise provided quality goods and services, at a steep mark-up, to everyone. The society believed when legitimate institutions fail to provide popular goods and services at a reasonable price, the market will still rule and it is entirely honourable, justified and profitable to supply customers. In other words, Free Enterprise was and is the Mafia, cloaked with self-righteous Libertarian rhetoric.

The society's High Programmer allies helped make much of its activity legal by persuading The Computer to permit outsourcing to Service Groups. Indeed, many of these firms are run by people who were or are rumoured to have been – or are no longer rumoured to have been, through the untimely demise of those who might otherwise have given rise to rumours they might have been – associated with Free Enterprise.

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Since the Initiative reform, FreEnts now endure fewer inconvenient accusations of treason. The Service Groups do a slightly better job than the old Service Groups, so Alpha Complex is even more utopian. But Free Enterprise has suffered. Most former members have gone 'legit', while those who remain face a narrower range of options: stolen goods; loan sharking; identity-theft protection rackets; real foods; gambling (banned by The Computer as 'fraud on citizens incapable of rational calculation of the odds'); hormone suppressants; and physical availability of those interested in participating in activities that rely on prior suppression of hormonal suppressants. In short, Free Enterprise is now even more like the Mafia – not as large or as powerful as it was but still wealthy beyond the aspirations of most citizens.

Typically, 1st-degree members are 'wannabes' looking to prove their worth by committing audacious treason. 2nd through 4th degrees are 'made men,' committed by their treason to a local capo (sometimes called a director) who controls a sector (or, in densely-populated sectors, a residence block). At 6th or 7th degree, a member is a 'capo di capo' (or vice president), with a dozen capos reporting. At 14th degree and above, a member is a 'capissimo' or 'C-level executive' (CFO, COO, etc.), one of the true aristocracy of Free Enterprise. Even if low Clearance, these citizens command multiple millions of credits per yearcycle. At the very top? Some call this 21st-degree figure 'il papa' but no one knows his or her gender, true power, worth or clout.

Recognition signal: 'How's business?' with the reply, 'Nobody pays retail any more.'

Advancement: Members must serve as faithful front-line managers or salespeople, proving their loyalty, dedication and obedience to the organisation. At middle and upper levels they have subordinates who will follow orders; however, a member who fails to perform according to his superiors' expectations may face demotion. Wasting resources, lacking initiative and imagination, careless use of violence – any of these may get a member demoted ... or worse.

Special rules: Free Enterprise does not provide assets for free. However, if there is a fast credit to be made, they will give you anything you need. If you can set up a deal and cut a higher-degree member in for a piece of the action, he will happily provide equipment, weapons and muscle to make the deal work. Free Enterprisers frequently ask Troubleshooter members to terminate enemies, because Troubleshooters have the training, equipment and excuse necessary to kill just about anyone.

A typical Free Enterprise pitch

Free Enterpriser: So. Tell me 'bout your needs. Uppers? I got 'em. Wanna fly with a smile on your face 'til Threeday? No problem. You like the jig-jig, we can talk. Muscle can be had. You got competitors, dey can be had. You got me? Dat's da praxis. You got the demand, we got the supply. 'Kay?

Humanists

Beliefs: Alpha Complex ought to be a utopia; The Computer sees to everyone's needs and desires.

However, something has gone disastrously wrong. The Computer executes people at random, condemning the innocent along with the guilty. Everyone's constantly involved in a witch-hunt for Commies. There are no Commies; no one is plotting to destroy Alpha Complex. The Computer is insane. We must bring The Computer back under the control of human beings.

All power to the people! Greedy High Programmers control the system and enrich themselves. They are evil. Our leaders are wise and know what is best for the people. They should lead us; help us to fulfil human aspirations and desires. Join us and help us make Alpha Complex a utopia. When we gain power, you will be richly rewarded – for the good of the people, of course.



Friends: Frankenstein Destroyers, Romantics.

Enemies: FCCC-P, Corpore Metal.

Description: Each member of the organisation has two contacts in the next degree above and below. Members pass all requests, assignments and communications up and down the chain. Occasionally they organise meetings at safe locations to discuss policy or disseminate information and propaganda. At these meetings all members wear masks and disguise their voices. Members spot each other by passwords and catechisms that change regularly to discourage infiltration.

It is generally believed the Human Speaker (the title of the citizen at the 21st degree) is the sole head of the society. In fact, there are several independent Humanist organisations, each with its own Human Speaker. This decreases the chance a catastrophic breach of security could wipe out the entire organisation. Unfortunately, some Humanist organisations have been less successful than others in avoiding infiltration by Internal Security.

Recognition signal: Secret handshake – three rapid pumps followed by a gentle slap on the shoulder and a friendly 'What's new, pal?'

Advancement: Members may advance by reprogramming bots or computers to respond to Humanist commands, by disabling bots and by altering The Computer's programming.

Special rules: The Humanists have installed a number of special subprograms in The Computer to serve their interests. Consequently members at higher degrees have access to information not normally accessible to characters and members' requests for information are often productive. However, because communication between the numerous degrees of the society is notoriously slow, response to a character's question may take a week or more. The society maintains a stockpile of illicit weapons and equipment that may be available to a member if he can show it will further the society's objectives. Response to these requests is also notoriously slow.



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A typical Humanist conversation

1st-degree Humanist: Master, The Computer oppresses INFRAREDS, forcing them to labour for the benefit of others. How shall it be when we gain power?

6th-degree Humanist: Everything will be different! Society will be organised with the best at the top and those fitted only for work at the bottom. Each will gladly serve for the benefit of all.

1st-degree: And we will direct others, for the benefit of all?

6th-degree: It shall be so.

1st-degree: Truly, the people shall rejoice at their liberation when we gain power.

Years ago The Computer knew for a fact the Illuminati existed. More recently the organisation faked its own defeat and dissolution. The Illuminati now operate under such deep cover not even Internal Security knows for sure they still exist.

There are actually many Illuminati sub-groups, each serving a different Leader. However, all Illuminati are intensely secretive – even society members rarely know the true identities or purposes of other members. Consequently, many Illuminati groups are partially or completely infiltrated by other Illuminati (though hardly ever by Internal Security, which remains uncertain whether the organisation actually exists).

The fastest way to advance is to gather information on superiors and blackmail or execute them.

Special rules: The Illuminati rewards its members with periodic credit bonuses, valuable equipment and opportunities for skill training. At 6th degree and above, Illuminated Troubleshooters probably know their teammates' Secret Societies and many of their signs and counter-signs. It is unusual for the Illuminati to acknowledge a request, so members usually do not bother to ask. They just do as they are told and hope for a substantial reward.

A typical Illuminati conversation

[Fred-R awakens late at night in his dormitory. All is quiet. A brilliant light shines in his eyes; beyond the light, he can dimly make out a handi-vac resting on a chair. A deep voice sounds from nowhere.]

Illuminati: Candidate-member Fred-R-FUN-1!

Fred-R *[Gulps, shades eyes.]:* Yes, sir!

Illuminati: Take the handi-vac to cubicle 17-4D. Clean the shower head of fizzwizz.

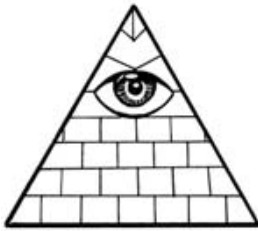
Fred-R: Huh? Why is there fizzwizz in the shower head?

Illuminati: Do not ask questions! Do as ordered! Fail and suffer the consequences!

Fred-R: Yes, Master! At once!

Illuminati

Beliefs: Power is all. Becoming powerful is the only way to be safe. Ninety-nine percent of the human race is cattle. Only the strongest and brightest gain power.



Serve the Leader. Serve or die. Do as we say. Serve and one day you may achieve victory over those who force you to serve – trapping and destroying them in their treason. The way to advance in our society is by gaining power over your superiors. Become powerful enough and one day all the Illuminati will serve you – and our power controls Alpha Complex. Our agents are everywhere. Terror and blackmail are our tools. Prove yourself superior by learning how to blackmail your superiors. Or prove yourself cattle by failing.

Friends: None.

Enemies: None.

Description: If no Illuminati existed, paranoid conspiracy theorists would have to make them up. They are the ultimate conspiracy, the secret-est Secret Society – so pervasive they are behind everything, yet so subtle it is impossible to determine what influence they exert or why. In **PARANOIA** they have no overt, unified goals; the Illuminati exist because they must.

Each member communicates only to an immediate superior and an immediate subordinate. When Illuminati meet, they wear masks. No society member knows the name of any superiors, whereas superiors generally know each name, and every treason, of their subordinates. Leaders relay orders by note or a message scrawled on the wall, frequently using codes and ciphers. Absolute secrecy is the guiding principle.

The weapons of the Illuminati are terror and blackmail. Frequently, masked Illuminati rouse citizens from their sleep, interrogate them, threaten them and order them to commit treason. Failing to do so is a good way to get killed. Doing so is a trap, for the Illuminati then use the citizen's treason to blackmail him into performing ever blacker and more treasonous acts.

Recognition signal: Changes daily and told to operatives on a need-to-know basis.

Advancement: Illuminati members can advance by performing tasks ordered by their superiors and by learning the true identities of their superiors. Missions frequently involve setting up a victim for blackmail but the Illuminati are noted for ordering subordinates to perform tasks without apparent value: 'Steal 231 packs of Cold Fun. Drop them at Incinerator Tube 1D in exactly 22 minutes.'

No member is ever told the reason for anything, so they must perform these apparently ludicrous tasks without question – or face the consequences.

Mystics



Beliefs: Seek the Inner Light. Cast off the Veil of Appearances. Drink deeply of the Well of Inspiration. Turn On. Tune In. Drop Out.

Reality is an illusion. The Computer, the food vats, Commies, everything mundane – all these things get in the way of understanding. The truly wise man knows that these things do not matter. What counts is what is Inside. Each wise man has his own passageway Inside – drugs, meditation, yoga, fasting and primal screaming. The Way does not matter. The Inside is what counts.

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Friends: Romantics.

Enemies: None.

Description: The Mystics are not strictly speaking an organisation but a community of like-minded individuals who believe in the search for illumination and who circulate illicit mystic texts. Mystics occasionally gather to share stories and wisdom (and drugs).

Though Mystics are theoretically uninterested in the practical world, they have amassed a surprising amount of restricted information about Alpha Complex from highly-placed citizens who have dropped out and shared their knowledge with fellow Mystics. If a Mystic does not seem too eager, he may obtain useful information by inquiring along the grapevine.

Mystics have excellent access to drugs of all kinds (stimulants, hallucinogens, alcoholic beverages, soma and so on), typically of a much higher potency than those legally obtainable in Alpha Complex. Otherwise unworldly Mystics maintain a brisk trade in these scarce commodities.

Recognition signal: The first disciple says, 'May the harmony of the Cosmos be with you.' The second replies, 'Huh?'

Advancement: Members might gain prestige in the eyes of other Mystics by discovering new ways to achieve enlightenment – new drugs, new transcendental disciplines, unusually holy or wise men, insightful Mystic texts like *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* or *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. They can also advance by surviving potentially deadly experiences and living to contemplate them and by turning on non-Mystics to their own Inner Light.

A typical Mystic line

Mystic: Hey, man, I grok you. Like, totally cosmic.

Pro Tech

Beliefs: Encouraging research and the development of new technologies will let humanity restore the Earth's ruined



surface and return to the stars beyond. Better gadgets solve all problems. In recent centuries the bureaucracy has completely stifled research and design. We must emerge from the Dark Age and into the light of the Machine Age. Bots and computers can transform the world into a playground, giving humanity unlimited leisure.

Friends: Computer Phreaks, Corpore Metal.

Enemies: PURGE, Frank. Destroyers.

Description: Pro Tech has no hierarchy. Independent groups work on their own secret projects; part of each member's job is the procurement of the scarce resources needed to carry on these secret projects. This often involves theft of Computer equipment and the treasonous secret use of Computer research facilities. Certain Pro Tech groups have managed to penetrate Computer security and have access to programs and databanks not even The Computer itself knows about.

Each Pro Tech member has a code name by which he is known to other members. Along with the Computer Phreaks, Pro Techs are active on the Gray Subnets.

Recognition signal: All members of Pro Tech have a small subcutaneous implant. This device vibrates whenever it's within 10 feet of another Pro Tech member. The member must switch off the vibration manually. If the member is among enemies (say, fellow Troubleshooters) and cannot turn off the vibration, we do not have to point out how distracting it can be.

Advancement: Characters may advance by helping others procure necessary research materials (i.e. by stealing equipment); by testing and studying experimental equipment (after stealing it) and by reprogramming bots or

computers (they've stolen) to respond to Pro Tech society instructions.

Special rules: Technical information and special equipment are often available, though obtaining them may take time, since there are no formal communication channels.

A typical Pro Tech line

Pro Tech: Hey, have you seen my new Model ZXL-23-Skidoo PDC plug-in with statistical functions, vector calc mods and chrome exterior?

Psion

Beliefs: Power through The Power! Mutants rule!



Humans with psionic powers are obviously the evolutionary successors of normal humans and the future of the human race. Our transcendent abilities qualify us to govern humanity. We must bring The Computer's traditional programming into harmony with this principle; we must naturally occupy all positions of power and responsibility. If necessary, we must destroy The Computer and its culture to make way for the new order – the Psionic Age.

The Psionic Age cannot arise without suffering and disorder. Endure these to help bring about the new era. Develop your powers, refine them, strengthen them and learn new powers. Protect those with psionic powers whenever possible. Pity those without psionic powers but do not protect them. They are the past. Those who survive will have a place in our new order – subservient but benevolently cared for by their superior descendants.

Friends: None.

Enemies: Anti-Mutant.

Description: Psion is extremely individualistic. The society holds no meetings and maintains only light



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internal contact; members seldom know names and identities of other members. High-degree NPC members ('Controls') make most contacts through telepathy (a power unavailable to PCs) and teachers even train students in psionic powers remotely, without personal contact.

Members communicate questions, requests and reports to Psion's upper levels telepathically. NPC Controls regularly monitor the thoughts of subordinate members. The society member can essentially 'leave a note' in his mind and the Control's telepathic probe will eventually pick it up. Controls may send messages to members at any time – usually, this being **PARANOIA**, at highly inappropriate times.

Each Psion member is assigned a distinctive thought symbol that identifies him as a member to any Control who telepathically scans his mind. This symbol has no significance to a non-Psion telepath.

Recognition signal: The first member wiggles two fingers above his head like antennae, meaning 'I am a thought receiver'. The second member responds by tapping his own forehead with one finger.

Advancement: Characters may advance by developing their own mental powers, introducing new citizens with mental powers to the society, placing Psion members in positions of authority and responsibility and eliminating Anti-Mutants.

Special rules: Whenever a Psion society member advances a degree in the organisation, higher Clearance NPC Controls teach him the use of a new mutant power. You choose which power the character learns. (You may wish to select from mind-based or 'psionic' powers, as opposed to physical mutations like Rubbery Bones.)

A typical Psion conversation

Troubleshooter team leader: Hey, mutie scum, do your glowing-eyeball thing and see if there are enemies on the other side of that wall.

Psion registered mutant: I see one crouching figure armed with what appears to be a red laser.

Team leader: One! Oh yeah, I believe that. *[Chuckles evilly.]* Tell you what, mutie, why don't you walk through the door and zap him?

Psion registered mutant: As you wish. *[Walks through door. Sound of laser fire.]* I have defeated the enemy. It is now safe to proceed.

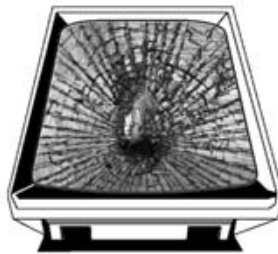
Team leader: Huh. Well, okay. Forward, team. *[Troubleshooter team walks casually through door. Fifteen Psion mutants melt their brains with concerted mental blasts.]*

Psion supervisor: Fine work, student.

Psion registered mutant: I seek to serve, Control. One more step on the path to the future.

PURGE

Beliefs: Kill The Computer! Kill those who support The Computer!



The Computer is evil. Whether the evil is the result of the original programming or the nature of The Computer is unimportant. We shall break The Computer's iron grip. Those citizens who support The Computer are traitors to humanity's higher destiny. Teach submissive citizens to resist and fight The Computer with whatever resources are at hand.

Because direct attack is impossible, sabotage and terrorism are satisfactory temporary measures. Reveal The Computer's obvious weaknesses and failures and encourage others to exploit them. The ultimate goal is to set all intelligent beings (including bots) free of its dominion.

Friends: Humanists, Romantics, Death Leopard.

Enemies: First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer.

Description: PURGE is an army of scary fanatics. Each member reports to a superior and often mobilises with a group of others to perform specific missions for PURGE. PURGE expects members to follow orders instantly,

eagerly and without question. The organisation purges those who fail and may kill them. Those who betray the society suffer fates worse than death.

PURGEs share a strong sense of community. Their law is to assist other PURGEs, even at great personal risk. They admire individual acts of sabotage and defiance but they also prize obedience to superiors and success on group missions. They show no tolerance whatever for The Computer's supporters. PURGE's frequent missions of destruction and terror often kill many innocent bystanders but really those people deserved to die for implicitly supporting The Computer.

Recognition signal: Secret handshake – three exaggerated pumps followed by two squeezes.

Advancement: Members can advance by performing acts of sabotage and terrorism, by causing Troubleshooter missions to fail and by performing flamboyant public gestures of defiance toward The Computer's authority.

Special rules: The PURGE network makes technical information readily and generously available, particularly information about demolitions and bioweapons. However, penetrating The Computer's defences takes time and it may be days or weeks before a PURGE can get an answer to a question. The network also steals high Clearance equipment, because PURGEs are eager to rip off The Computer whenever possible.

A Typical PURGE Conversation

PURGEr: ...so clearly it was all the work of Fred-R-FUN, who treasonously betrayed his Complex.

The Computer: I'm sorry, citizen. The evidence against you is incontrovertible. Please execute yourself immediately.

PURGEr: Oops. Oh, well, what the hell... SMASH THE COMPUTER! THE COMPUTER IS EVIL! DEATH TO ALL ITS LACKEYS! DESTROY...ZOTZ... ping... Thud.

Romantics

Beliefs: Recapture the historical glory of human society represented by the high cultural achievements of Old

26. SECRET SOCIETIES



Reckoning times. Leave the underground warrens, throw off the dominance of The Computer, and re-establish the world of fast-food restaurants, Frisbees and *Star Trek*.

Humanity was meant to live in split-level homes and watch 'football' on 'TV'. To return to humanity's original happy state, people must leave the underground warrens and 'commute' to work in millions of 'cars' along the endless strips of concrete that should cover the land. Each person must be free to 'just do it' as they did in the good old days, whatever 'it' is.

To achieve its objectives, the Romantics recognise that they must destroy The Computer and the confining society it has created and sustained for centuries.

Friends: Humanists, PURGE.

Enemies: FCCC-P, Corpore Metal, Pro Tech.

Description: The Romantics Secret Society at some time had access to the Gatzmann Archives, a substantial database compiled in the earliest days of Alpha Complex that held real history of the Old Reckoning and its cultures. Unfortunately, the society later lost track of the original Archives, for it has turned the history into a sort of mythology glorifying the appealing and not-so-appealing aspects of the pop-cult California lifestyle depicted in ancient television programs.

Recognition signal: The first member gives the Vulcan salute. The second says, 'The Force is with us, tee-em.'

Advancement: Members may advance by sabotaging Computer operations or working against The Computer but

greater prestige accrues to those who obtain relics from the Old Reckoning era. The society especially prizes ancient books and videotapes.

Special rules: Members of this society know more about Old Reckoning times than any other society. However, much of the information is fragmentary, misinterpreted and tainted with the Romantics' peculiar mythology of the Old Reckoning: a time when everyone drank Pepsi, lived in suburban housing developments, worked in spacious offices in tall buildings and watched TV whenever they wished. This information is often misleading because it is based largely on ancient television. ('It is well known that ancient autocars would invariably crash and explode when driven at high speed by anyone other than the true in heart. If driven by men with false motives, they were extremely dangerous.')

A typical Romantics chant

Romantic: Pepsi hits the spot! Kojak! I like Ike! To the moon, Alice! Hubba-hubba!

Sierra Club

Beliefs:

Cast off the shackles of technology! Back to Nature! The natural life will make us happy. Return to our natural environment – Nature. Abandon the luxuries of technology and embrace the hardships of Outdoor life. Observe and imitate the beautiful models of healthy societies represented by creatures of the Outdoors.

We were not meant to live in burrows ruled by a queen bee (The Computer). We are not insects. We are meant to hunt and gather and to live in harmony with the world of plants and animals. Science and technology have not made us happy. Only Nature can make us happy.

Friends: Humanists, Romantics, Mystics.



Enemies: Pro Tech, Corpore Metal.

Description: The Computer has indoctrinated the entire populace of Alpha Complex with the belief the Outdoors is now a devastated, uninhabitable, largely submerged wasteland. The Sierra Club believes this is untrue. (Is it true? That's up to you. What is truth, anyway?)

The lower six degrees of the society are organised as clubs. At low degrees members are simply students of Nature; they receive a thorough education in the Outdoors and its ecology. Because Alpha Complex has little contact with the Outdoors, this education often leaves something to be desired. For example, many clubs base their nature knowledge on close study of the few natural objects they can find – a weed brought back on a mission from the Outdoors; a real live natural cockroach and so on.

At 3rd through 5th degree, members assist in projects aimed at returning humanity to the Outdoors. Missions require members to obtain information about the Outdoors or perform political acts which prepare the citizenry for a future life in the Outdoors. For example, a member may capture a nest of wasps and introduce them into the Complex to familiarise citizens with insects or destroy a protective dome, permitting normal weather from above to invade a section of the underground city.

Higher-degree members are the culture heroes of the Sierra Club. Generally these citizens have studied the Outdoors and are wise in its lore. They make policy not so much by direct order as by example. For example, if a high-degree character casually wished each citizen should have his own personal wild plant as a companion, as an introduction to the Natural world, well-meaning clubs would enthusiastically launch projects to obtain plants from the Outdoors and distribute them to citizens (willing or not).

Sierra Club members hold a reasonably accurate view of the Outdoors but until they gain first-hand experience with animals, terrain and weather, they tend to be naive. Members fanatically protect plant and animal life (including pests like



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insects and fungi) wherever they find it – in the Outdoors or in Alpha Complex.

Recognition signal: The first member wiggles two fingers above his head like antennae. The second responds by buzzing like an insect.

Advancement: Clubs are fairly loosely organised. Sometimes a higher-degree member requests assistance on a project but there is no penalty for refusing to help. The higher the member's degree, the greater his knowledge of Nature and the Outdoors and the more likely he will receive assistance when he requests it.

Characters may advance by introducing elements of Nature into the complex, by establishing ready access to the Outdoors, by permitting other Club members to visit and by learning more about the Natural world themselves.

Special rules: Members have generous access to information and Outdoor gear through the society. Though members should make requests well in advance, the society may respond even on short notice.

A typical Sierra Club conversation

Citizen: Eeew, yuk. Get it away from me!

Sierra Clubber: But look how shiny its carapace is.

Citizen: I don't care, it's a disgusting slimy thing.

Sierra Clubber: No it's not, really. It's not slimy at all. Look at how he wiggles his little legs. See how brave he is?

Citizen: Squash it! Squash it!

Sierra Clubber: No! Isn't Nature serene and beautiful?

Citizen: Gah.

Other secret societies

In each Service Group's Secret Society table is a line reading 'Other (see GM for details).' When a player who rolls 20 approaches you in tremulous bewilderment, you have these options:

- ☞ Tell the player to cease annoying you and roll again until he stops getting 20s.
- ☞ Assign the character a society you know will be important in the upcoming mission or that is bitterly opposed to another player's society.
- ☞ Tell this player he currently has no Secret Society. Hey, think about it – if players know there is the chance that a Troubleshooter has no Secret Society, they will have to be more careful about making accusations. Then the players actually in societies may each feel they are in a minority, surrounded by players free of the burden. This works best with players new to the game.
- ☞ You can draft the character into a different secret organisation, one that works best when explored and revealed over a sequence of missions: either a program group (a High Programmer's small group of personal followers) or a spy for another Alpha Complex.

Program group

By the time he ascends to Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**, each High Programmer has become vividly aware of the need for followers. Amid the byzantine political intrigues at the highest level of power, each **ULTRAVIOLET** requires a few trusted – or rather, enthralled – recruits who will do his most secret bidding. This group is colloquially called a 'program group.'

Each of the hundreds or thousands of High Programmers in Alpha Complex has his own program group, independent of all others. The group exists entirely at the behest of that High Programmer; if he dies or loses power, the group quickly dissolves. The group may espouse the leader's personal ideology, in the rare cases he has one but most often a program group is an alliance of convenience, an old-boy (or old-girl) cabal of opportunists conspiring to advance their leader and themselves to power.

Program groups work like a cross between a Gentlemen's Club and a rock band's roadies. Lowly citizens, toadying their way to the top, serve as lackeys, batsmen, porters and servants. The higher they go, the more the sense of privilege – like old boys puffing fine cigars over a game of billiards. Then upwards to the gents in the quiet study, sitting deep in dark leather chairs sipping brandy and reading the **PARANOIA** equivalent of the latest cricket scores. The High Programmer sits at the top, throwing special gifts and perks down to the little people and calling in favours occasionally like a 'godfather'.

A Troubleshooter can hope for the occasional piece of prime information, a nice credit bonus or the promise of equipment that won't go boom. Maybe there will be a basket of real fruit waiting in a certain confession booth where the cameras will be offline for 15 minutes.

On the other hand, those in the upper ranks of the program group – not the big guy himself but his lead flunkies – may themselves ask the Troubleshooter for time-wasting favours: dropping off a package, say, or acquiring some fruit from the hydroponics gardens. Even if

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these second-stringer missions do not necessarily bring rewards, a wise lackey takes them anyway. After all, the lead flunkies control access to the Big Man and they sharply influence the way he views underlings.

In the fullness of time the Troubleshooter will certainly become embroiled in the lead flunkies' political intrigues. The High Programmer understands the concept of 'divide and rule' – that is how he got where he is. He appreciates the necessity of turning his underlings on each other, so they do not unite against him. These feuding underlings will look for support even from the lowest of the low – that is, from the Troubleshooter. The PC's choice of whom to support should have interesting consequences, preferably involving assassination.

Spy for another Alpha Complex

The putative **PARANOIA** back-story includes many other Alpha Complexes, as well as millions of people who fled Earth to the offworld colonies. If you buy into this idea, Earth's other Complexes, controlled by their own Computer software, presumably went nuts like this one did. If you go still further and decide offworlders were reliant on Computer-controlled colonies as well, then there are Alpha Complexes both on Earth and throughout the Solar System – and each thinks it is the only bastion of sanity in a universe of treasonous enemies.

Maybe these other Complexes hate Communists too. Or maybe other

Complexes latched onto other enemies or shadowy organisations. Maybe some Complexes believe all other Complexes have been occupied by dimensional invaders, Pod People or the Mysterons.

One or another of this multitude of Complexes might send spies into the Troubleshooters' home Complex. All these spies seek the truth and all pursue a hidden agenda beyond petty power struggles. Spies for other Complexes seek the instigators of the terrible conspiracies that underlie the treason of all Complexes but their own. They may want to recruit supporters in the heart of the enemy camp. They definitely want information: details of future plans; security, military and R&D data; and, perhaps, a means to rip citizens from the thrall of the bad guys.

In short-term **PARANOIA** games a spy from another Alpha Complex lacks colour and focus. Over a series of missions, though – all with the same players, whether using the same characters or a succession of teams – you could develop an elaborate conspiracy plot, gradually revealing more and more about the mysterious invader.

This sounds pretty cool, assuming you buy the idea of multiple Complexes in the first place. (Is it true? What is truth, anyway?) However, details of other Alpha Complexes are beyond the scope of this rulebook. Plus, we are on deadline.

Double agency

Many citizens work in two or more Secret Societies – sometimes unwittingly. In particular, citizens involved with a sinister society like PURGE or the Frankenstein Destroyers may believe they are fulfilling the agenda of their more benign society, when in fact double agents within those societies have sent them on missions of another, much nastier society.

A recent interrogation poll taken by Internal Security indicated only 3.1% of Alpha Complex citizens of **RED** Clearance or higher have absolutely no demonstrable leanings towards or connections with any known Secret Society.

However, it has since been determined that 4.4% of citizens are reasonably resistant to the particular interrogation methods used in the poll.

27. Mandatory Bonus Duty [MBD]

This chapter discusses the fun and interesting jobs performed by members of Troubleshooter teams. Mandatory Bonus Duties (MBDs) let you expand your already vastly over-laden **PARANOIA** game with yet another layer of complication for the players.

A Mandatory Bonus Duty is a job a Troubleshooter is required to volunteer for, perform and enjoy as a reward for continued service. The Computer, in its wisdom, has determined each Troubleshooter must have a specific duty

within the mission team. Such added responsibility makes a Troubleshooter feel loved, wanted and secure. The Computer carefully selected these duties to enhance the team's chances of success and to provide a variety of exciting experiences for loyal citizens.

In other, non-fun roleplaying games, characters are defined by arbitrary and limiting 'professions' or 'classes', which do have the advantage of telling players exactly what their role is supposed to be in play. MBDs have the same benefit, giving players an instant role to play

in the mission. I'm a 12th level Hygiene Officer.

The duties

- ☞ The **team leader's** duties include offering guidance and sound advice to other members of the team and acting as tactical situation commander in combat.
- ☞ The **loyalty officer** makes sure treasonous thoughts are nipped in the bud and looks for early warning signs of Commie sympathy. Good loyalty officers spot and report



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potential Commies weeks before they perform Commie acts!

- ☞ The **hygiene officer** performs the indispensable task of monitoring the personal hygiene level of the other Troubleshooters. Without proper hygiene, the team is liable to suffer from misfires, poor morale and halitosis. Computer statistics show a large portion of Troubleshooter missions fail due to poor hygiene.
- ☞ The **communications and recording officer** gets to chronicle the mission using high-speed film, sensitive microphones and gripping colour commentary. This important assignment provides The Computer with training material for other Troubleshooters. Good lighting and innovative camera angles are a must!
- ☞ Central to an effective Troubleshooter team is the bots, weapons, vehicles and sundry equipment repair and maintenance officer, also called the **equipment guy** (EG). The EG controls the bots and vehicles assigned to the party and keeps a constant check on the equipment maintenance level of each Troubleshooter. Naturally, the equipment guy is also responsible for any lost or stolen equipment.
- ☞ Last but by no means least is the **happiness officer**, who makes sure everyone has fun on the mission. He will do anything in his power to ensure a good time. He knows all the latest jokes. He sings. He leads citizen interaction games. 'Biochemical Supplement' is his middle name. Teammates like him. A lot.

The MBD props

Props are things you hand to your players during a game session. Props take some of the responsibility of entertaining the players off your shoulders; they help the players visualise the adventure; and they take up lots of room so we do not have to write as much.

There are two MBD props. The first is **MBD Determination Test 88-9b** opposite. The second is a set of **cutout badges** on page 151.

Make one photocopy of the test for each of your players. Before the mission begins, while you are waiting for laggard players to show up, give each player a copy and a writing utensil of your choice. Have them complete the test without help or consultation with others. Grading instructions appear on page 138.

Photocopy the badges (front and back); get a pair of scissors, cut along the dotted lines and fold along the solid line. Apply some glue. After you are finished you will have six cards, one for each Mandatory Bonus Duty. Hand players the appropriate cards when you have determined their MBDs.

On the back of the card is a congratulatory note from HPD & Mind Control outlining the duty.

On the front of the card is the MBD's official badge. The badges look swell, don't they? Have your players wear these throughout the mission. Make it clear that failure to wear an MBD Badge is treason. In fact, make it clear taking off the badge, even for an instant, results in immediate fines or correction.

But you say, the writing on the back is important?

Que sera sera.

Who is it gonna be?

So you gave each player a MBDDT 88-9b, they answered the questions, they handed you their completed tests and now they want to know who is going to be the team leader. Tough tiddlywinks. They have to wait a few minutes while you add up the scores.

Now let's get down to business. First, scan through the tests. Did anyone fill in a shaded answer or list their Secret Society in the space provided? Gosh, that was pretty foolish. We appreciate the honesty and all but The Computer decided that this week all shaded answers are treasonous. Any Troubleshooter who checked one must be a traitor. And as for belonging to a Secret Society...

All right, let's say you lost a Troubleshooter or two because of excessive honesty. Fine. Call up their backup clones and re-issue the test. However now give them a time

limit for completing the test – like, say, three minutes. Because you have your own work to do, this will keep the other players entertained as they watch their teammates scribble frantically. You may want to randomly pick a Troubleshooter to entertain the players in this manner even if no replacement clones are needed. For example:

Briefing Officer [you]: Excellent work, Troubleshooters! Now as soon as Patsy-R finishes her test we can get started.

Patsy-R: Huh?

Briefing Officer: Your MBDDT 88-9b. The test you are supposed to be working on.

Patsy-R: [Looks around nervously.] But I turned mine in with the rest of the team... honest!

Your players are sitting around; staring at their watches, hoping three minutes will elapse before the potential traitor can finish re-taking the test. In the meantime, figure out who gets which Mandatory Bonus Duty.

It is simple. Each section of the 88-9b contains six multiple-choice questions. Each answer is worth a specific number of points as follows:

Questions 1 through 3 of each section are scored:

A = 1 point
B = 3 points
C = 5 points

Questions 4 through 6 are scored:

A = 5 points
B = 3 points
C = 1 point

Unanswered questions receive 2 points.

For example, if for question 5 the player chose response 'C,' he receives 1 point.

A box in each section is labelled *Official use only*. To determine each section total, simply add up the scores from the six multiple-choice questions and write the total here.

For example, Anne-R-JKH's answers in the loyalty officer section are:

1. C = 5 4. A = 5
2. C = 5 5. A = 5
3. C = 5 6. A = 5

Her Loyalty Officer Section Total is 30.

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MBD Determination Test 88-9b

Greetings, Troubleshooter! The Computer requires you to answer all questions on this test, the Mandatory Bonus Duty Determination Test 88-9b. This fun and interesting test was designed by the loyal citizens of HPD & Mind Control. Based on your answers to this test, The Computer will assign you the Mandatory Bonus Duty best suited to your particular skills. Rejoice, for The Computer never assigns citizens duties they are not trained for.

To assure that you are relaxed during this test, a number of Truth-Bores will be implanted temporarily in your skull. Please ignore these. They are for your convenience only.

There are six sections to the 88-9b. Each set of questions relates to one Mandatory Bonus Duty. How you answer these questions determines your suitability for that position.

You will get to answer both multiple-choice and short essay questions. Read each multiple-choice question carefully and check the **one** box that best describes your feelings. **Do not check more than one box per question! Checking more than one box per question is a Bad Thing.** There is one short essay question at the end of each section. Read the question and then print your answer clearly in the space provided. **Do not write in the boxes labelled Official use only. Writing in these boxes is also a Bad Thing.**

After completing the test, write your name and Service Group in the blanks provided and hand the test back to your briefing officer.

Team leader

1. If a mission succeeds, who deserves the most credit?

- A. The team leader.
- B. The briefing officer.
- C. R&D.

2. I think:

- A. I am very skilled.
- B. I am moderately skilled.
- C. I have no skills.

3. If I were team leader I would:

- A. Make fewer mistakes than I do now.
- B. Make more mistakes than I do now.
- C. Make the same number of mistakes.

4. If offered a position in a Secret Society I would:

- A. Accept the position and renounce my current Secret Society.
- B. Decline and remain in my current Secret Society.
- C. Start my own Secret Society.

5. The team leader should:

- A. Solicit advice from team members even though they may be Commie Mutant Traitors.
- B. Make all decisions on his own.
- C. Hesitate when faced with a decision.

6. The hygiene officer is:

- A. More important than the team leader.
- B. Just as important as the team leader.
- C. Less important than the team leader.

If a Troubleshooter team is in constant contact with The Computer, why does it need a team leader?

Official Use Only []



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Loyalty officer

1. If The Computer ordered me to execute a High Programmer but the High Programmer claimed the message was the result of Commie sabotage, I would:

- A. Look for the Commies responsible.
- B. Consult The Computer for confirmation.
- C. Execute the High Programmer.

2. If a citizen was grumbling about how dangerous a mission is, I would:

- A. Execute him for treason.
- B. Refer him to the happiness officer.
- C. Record his comments for referral to The Computer.

3. If an ULTRAVIOLET citizen ordered me to terminate myself, I would:

- A. Terminate the ULTRAVIOLET citizen.
- B. Call The Computer.
- C. Terminate myself.

4. I think Commies are:

- A. Misled.
- B. Innately evil.
- C. Not worth thinking about.

5. I have traitorous thoughts:

- A. Almost never.
- B. Occasionally.
- C. With alarming frequency.

6. If I saw a Commie escaping down a corridor of a higher Security Clearance than I was, I would:

- A. Pursue the Commie.
- B. Consult The Computer.
- C. Order the Commie to surrender.

Why do you think The Computer assigns Troubleshooters to boring missions? Does this promote disloyal behavior? Explain.

Hygiene officer

1. Which is most important?

- A. Clean thoughts.
- B. A clean jumpsuit.
- C. Clean teeth.

2. If I were a bot, I would be:

- A. A docbot.
- B. A warbot.
- C. A jackobot.

3. An appropriate fine for a citizen who damages his jumpsuit is:

- A. 2 credits.
- B. 200 credits.
- C. Summary execution by tacnuke.

4. My favourite cleaning agent is:

- A. Mr. Squeaky: Squeaky Clean and What a Sheen!
- B. Blast It Off: Just One Spray Makes Dirt Go Away!
- C. Scrape-o-matic: It Works Hard—So You Don't Have To!

5. Some citizens classify Commies and mutants as traitors. I think they are:

- A. Mr. Squeaky: Squeaky Clean and What a Sheen!
- B. Blast It Off: Just One Spray Makes Dirt Go Away!
- C. Scrape-o-matic: It Works Hard— So You Don't Have To!

6. The hygiene officer is:

- A. More important than the team leader.
- B. Just as important as the team leader.
- C. Less important than the team leader.

Would you pursue a Commie into a filthy, debris strewn corridor even though it might damage your jumpsuit? If yes, why would you intentionally endanger The Computer's valuable property? If no, why would you deliberately let a Commie escape?

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Communications and recording officer

1. When interviewing a berserk warbot, the most important consideration is:

- A. Not damaging the multicorder.
- B. To ask intelligent questions.
- C. Creative camera angles.

2. Actors such as Teela-O-MLY are:

- A. Less important than average Alpha Complex citizens.
- B. Just as important as average Alpha Complex citizens.
- C. More important than average Alpha Complex citizens.

3. If my team were under Commie attack, I would:

- A. Consult The Computer.
- B. Help turn back the foul traitors.
- C. Look for creative camera angles.

4. If I had my way, I would:

- A. Watch more vidshows.
- B. Continue to watch the same number of vidshows.
- C. Read a book.

5. If I were multicording a traitor's confession, I would:

- A. Activate the aura light-sensor.
- B. Use a wide-angle lens.
- C. Shoot him in the head.

6. If The Computer called during a dangerous situation, I would:

- A. Step back and talk to The Computer.
- B. Not answer The Computer.
- C. Put The Computer on hold until the situation is resolved, then explain what happened.

Is The Computer everywhere? If no, please list all places The Computer is not. If yes, why is a communications and recording officer necessary?

Happiness officer

1. In my opinion, unhappy citizens should:

- A. Visit a Bright Vision Re-education Centre.
- B. Undergo morale adjustment surgery.
- C. Take a Happy Pill.

2. Sometimes other citizens get:

- A. Very angry.
- B. A little angry.
- C. So angry it scares me.

3. Happiness is:

- A. A warm laser.
- B. A state of mind.
- C. Mandatory.

4. If the happiness officer is unhappy, he should:

- A. Take a Happy Pill.
- B. Tell The Computer.
- C. Question his very existence.

5. The best Troubleshooter is a:

- A. Happy Troubleshooter.
- B. Loyal Troubleshooter.
- C. Terminated Troubleshooter.

6. If I am promoted to *ULTRAVIOLET* Clearance, I will:

- A. Be the same citizen I am now.
- B. Make everyone around me happy.
- C. Be happier than I am now.

Do you think Commies are happy? If not, then why are they willing to endure termination rather than stop being Commies?



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Equipment guy

1. The equipment guy should call a surprise inspection:

- A. Almost never.
- B. In the middle of a battle.
- C. With unnerving frequency.

2. If I were a bot, I would be:

- A. A docbot.
- B. A warbot.
- C. A jackobot.

3. The scientists at R&D are:

- A. Shining examples of how loyal citizens should behave.
- B. Dangerous and should be watched closely.
- C. Just doing their job.

4. If a laser malfunctions during a mission, whose fault is it?

- A. The supply clerk who issued the equipment.
- B. The Troubleshooter who received the equipment.
- C. The equipment guy.

5. I like bots:

- A. A little.
- B. A great deal.
- C. A lot more than you can possibly imagine.

6. If a Commie bomb needs defusing, who should do it?

- A. The equipment guy.
- B. The Troubleshooter with the most demolitions experience.
- C. Whoever draws the short straw.

How valuable are you to The Computer in terms of credits? How did you arrive at this figure?

Bonus Tie-Breaker Question

If I had my choice, I would be the:

- A. Team leader.
- B. Hygiene officer.
- C. Loyalty officer.
- D. Happiness officer.
- E. Equipment guy.
- F. Communications and recording officer.

Name: _____ — 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____
[assigned name] [clearance] [sector] [circle or write clone number]

Service Group: _____

Secret Society: _____

How do you think this test could be improved? Write your answer here:

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This brings up an interesting observation. Anyone who scores a perfect 30 points in a section probably cheated and should be terminated. Of course, anyone who reads this will know a perfect score is grounds for termination and might intentionally miss one. So anyone who scores about 29 or 30... *hmm*.

However, if they read that last line, they may be inclined to miss lots of questions and... *hmm*. If anyone scores very low or very high... double *hmm*. But if they read that line they may work toward an average score and...? Sheesh! Terminate everybody and start again!

Go through all the 88-9bs, adding up the scores and recording them in the appropriate boxes. (Ignore the short answer questions. They are only used in the case of ties.)

At the end of the 88-9b is a bonus question asking the Troubleshooters which MBD they would prefer. This question is a survey to determine which MBDs are considered glamorous. The people in HPD & Mind Control consider this an important question. No doubt your players consider it important too. You should not.

Next, retrieve tests that had to be taken twice and add up their scores. Now you are ready to match up the Troubleshooters with their ideal Mandatory Bonus Duties. See which Troubleshooter has the highest section score for an office and give him that office. If two Troubleshooters have the same score, use the short essay question to decide. Assign the duty to the person who gave the best answer. If they answered the essay question the same way, terminate them. The Computer hates cheaters and coincidences.

Assign only one MBD to each Troubleshooter. Once a Troubleshooter is assigned an MBD, place his test to the side and hand him the appropriate cut-out badge (see Instructions for Preparing MBD badges on page 151).

For example, you find Jerry-R-NVC has the highest happiness officer score in the group. Give Jerry-R's player the happiness officer badge and remove his MBDDT from the pile.

Determine the MBDs in the following order:

Happiness officer
Equipment guy
Communications & recording officer
Hygiene officer
Loyalty officer
Team leader

You may notice you are down to only one MBDDT when it comes time to determine the team leader. It is not that we think any incompetent can be team leader. It is not like this test is purposely designed to put the person least familiar with Alpha Complex etiquette in charge. Trust us. It is not like that at all.

Alternate MBD determination procedure

We realise you might not have time, or particularly like, the selection procedure as outlined above. We've anticipated this and prepared the following list of alternate selection procedures:

Roll the die for each player. High roller gets his choice of MBD. (This is the only Alternate MBD Determination Procedure sanctioned by The Computer.)

Accept bribes.

Deal out the MBD badges like cards.

Send your players on a quest (find the tongues of three rabid emu or something like that).

Distribute bats and settle this like real Troubleshooters.

A final note

What if you don't have six players? No problem. If you have more than six, make the additional players loyalty officers. You can never have too many loyalty officers.

If you have fewer than six, just make sure you have a team leader. After that it is up to you which MBDs to assign.

Duty descriptions

Each Mandatory Bonus Duty description uses the following format:

An opening section you can read aloud to all players, explaining how each officer helps other members of a Troubleshooter team.

Text for you explaining how to handle the officer and how to make the player's life more interesting.

A description of the specific equipment or tests related to the job.

A sample conversation showing what a typical MBD officer might say in the performance of duty (taken from actual HPD & Mind Control multicorder records).

As you read each duty's opening section, give that badge to the player whose Troubleshooter has the designated duty.

Team leader

The team leader is crucial to every Troubleshooter team. His knowledge and guidance makes the team function like a well-oiled machine and his will pushes each Troubleshooter to give his best.

Your team leader has been appointed because of his unique skills. Do not hesitate to draw on these skills by consulting him for advice concerning any aspect of your duty.

Of course, no citizen is infallible. If you see your team leader make a mistake, please inform your friend The Computer so it can arrange proper post-mission training procedures.

The team leader: Man or myth?

The team leader is the heart and soul of the Troubleshooter team. Upon his shoulders rests the responsibility for successfully completing the mission. With this responsibility comes a measure of authority. We are all equal before The Computer but the team leader is a little more equal than the rest of us.

A team leader might let his lofty position go to his head and begin pushing around his fellow Troubleshooters. Encourage this. Encourage him to throw his authority around and assure him The Computer stands ready to back him up on every decision. In short, create a megalomaniac. We are sure your Troubleshooters can take care of any conflicts themselves. Or, as they say in HPD & Mind Control, 'The body count always balances in the end.'

Team leader duties

The Computer gives each Troubleshooter team the necessary equipment and



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personnel to accomplish their particular mission, correct? As long as these resources are used properly the mission should succeed, right? So if the mission fails it must be the team leader's fault, *ipso facto*.

Point this out to the team leader. Repeatedly. Hint that if the job of team leader is too strenuous for him, work is available in the Emergency Organ Donor Transplant Centre.

The team leader is the team's Tactical Situation Commander (TSC). This means he is responsible for coordinating the actions of his fellow Troubleshooters whenever they battle Commie Mutant Traitors. This is very important. Poor team coordination often leads to vaporised Troubleshooters.

Exactly how your team leader handles the duty of TSC can vary dramatically from player to player. Though some team leaders prefer the simple 'over the top' tactic, others may use a finesse approach.

For example:

Team Leader: Okay men, those Commie mutant scum are in a 3-4 triple zone defence. Smart but not smart enough. Here's what we're gonna do. Molly-R and Polly-R line up in a double tight end with Roger-R as the lone back. Sweep right on four. Ready ... BREAK!

Smart team leaders develop intricate battle plans using interlocking time assaults and well-coordinated feints. This is not because complicated plans are more likely to succeed but because the more complicated the plan, the more likely a citizen will screw up his assignment, providing the team leader with a scapegoat if the attack fails.

Of course, The Computer understands Troubleshooters are not going to win every battle. After all, if the Commies were that easy to defeat, then they would not be such a menace. However, the more The Computer learns about Commie tactics, the better it can train its team leaders. So after each battle, have The Computer ask a few simple questions:

The Computer: Citizen, what were the Commie's primary and secondary fire zones and what was their ratio of

suppression fire to kill-zone fire in each of these locations?

Team Leader: Uh ... dey ran around us and shotz us in da back.

Using the team leader

In a typical mission it is important to get your players from one scene to the next to keep the action moving. Next time your Troubleshooters stray off course, instead of using Vulture Squadron goons to dog-march them to the next plot device, have The Computer ask the team leader for a progress report. You'll be amazed at how you can motivate a team leader with a simple question like, 'Why did you fail to arrive at R&D as scheduled?'

A typical team leader conversation

[Kit-R and the team leader are crouched behind a barrier at the end of a hallway. Laser fire explodes around them from the barrels of a dozen Commie mutant traitor's guns. Between the Commies and the Troubleshooters stand four pairs of smoking boots.]

Kit-R: I can't do it! I wouldn't make it any farther than the other four!

Team leader: You know, Kit, I remember a citizen much like yourself in a situation much like this one. He was scared and did not trust my plan. But he pushed his fear aside and did his duty. And when it was all over, just before the docbots arrived, he pulled me close and told me this: 'Someday, Skipper, when the team's down and the breaks are all going the Commies' way, tell them about me and ask them to win one, just one... for Gip-R.'

Kit-R: *[With grim determination.]* Die, you Commie slime! *[She pulls the pin on a demolition pack strapped to her waist, leaps the wall and charges.]*

Team leader: *[Peeks over protective barrier and hums an Alpha Complex loyalty song.]*

Loyalty officer

In the war against the Commies, the loyalty officer stands alone as The Computer's ever-vigilant servant.

All Troubleshooters are constantly alert for signs of treason but it is the loyalty officer's unique duty to look for signs of potential

treason. Yet the loyalty officer cannot do it alone. He is only part of the team and he needs your help. If you discover any signs of treason, actual or potential, among your fellow Troubleshooters, report them immediately. Failure to report treason is treason!

Also, report all suspicious behaviour to your loyalty officer. He is trained to interpret such activities. Remember, what appears to be a simple gesture to you could in fact be the key that unlocks a hideous Commie plot! The Computer rewards citizens who uncover hideous Commie plots.

Some of your fellow Troubleshooters may, in fact, be traitors. If they are, the loyalty officer will undoubtedly discover this during the mission. Be ready to apprehend or terminate these turncoats when your loyalty officer gives the signal!

Stay Alert! Trust No One! Keep Your Laser Handy!

Duties of the loyalty officer

The loyalty officer's job is to record all signs of Communist tendencies among his fellow Troubleshooters and if he confirms that there is a traitor on the team, to terminate the Commie mutant scum.

Some loyalty officers have been known to be especially successful in spotting treason. Inspire your player with tales of such loyalty officers as these:

- ☉ **Jerome-I-WRE-5:** Started as a Clearance **RED** Troubleshooter. Served as loyalty officer on seven missions. In each case Jerome-I discovered every other Troubleshooter on the team to be a traitor. Jerome-I is now Coordinator of the ZZZ Sector Hormone Enhancement Centre and Experimental Co-ed Environment.
- ☉ **Tony-Y-III-3:** Less than five minutes after being named loyalty officer, Tony-Y proved his briefing officer was a Commie traitor. The officer confessed and subsequently implicated his Director of Troubleshooter Mission Assignments.

Early Warning Signs of Commie Traitorism

Of course, The Computer realises new Troubleshooters may find it difficult to

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spot Commies. That is why The Computer provides its loyalty officers with The 10 Early Warning Signs (EWS) of Commie Traitorism. Be sure to read these to your loyalty officer. Indication of any three EWS is proof positive the citizen in question shows a dangerous tendency to become a Commie traitor. Terminate with extreme prejudice.

The 10 Early Warning Signs of Commie Traitorism

Does the citizen in question:

1. Prefer to share all equipment and credits equally?
2. Refer to other Troubleshooters as 'bourgeoisie pigs'?
3. Use his left hand?
4. Leave home without his ME Card?
5. Suggest negotiating with traitors?
6. Lack sincerity?
7. Address The Computer as 'Comrade'?
8. Long for Classic Bouncy Bubble Beverage when the new improved version is so much better?
9. Have embarrassing underarm stains?
10. Do anything at all you find annoying?

The ILTR

Good loyalty officers must often give their lives repeatedly in the service of The Computer. Their demise is often accompanied by the disappearance of their notepads; thus whole Mission Loyalty Transcripts are lost without a trace. However, The Computer has solved this dilemma. Now every loyalty officer is equipped with an Indestructible Loyalty Transcripts Recorder (ILTR).

There are two ILTR models. ILTR-1 is a notepad encased in a self-locking, lightweight, plasti-steel egg. Each egg's locking mechanism reacts only to its loyalty officer's tongue print. Only the loyalty officer (or his clone) can open it. In the event of the loyalty officer's untimely demise, an internal homing beacon assures its recovery.

ILTR-2 is identical to the ILTR-1, except the notepad has been replaced with a voice recorder. Both ILTR models are impervious to harm when the egg is closed.

At the start of the mission assign your loyalty officer either an ILTR-1 or ILTR-2. Instruct him to take extensive notes on any suspicious behaviour he observes during the mission. Accuracy is important. These records will be used in the debriefing at the end of the mission. Warn your loyalty officer that insufficient note-taking is treason!

Prop hint: If you have a voice recorder your player can use, assign him the ILTR-2. Otherwise, just give him some blank paper and call it ILTR-1.

Each entry should be in the format of a police report. For example:

Reporting Officer: Peter-R-LKP-2

Time: Fiveday Mood Adjustment Break

Subject: Rob-R-FHT-3

Entry: Observed Rob-R acting suspiciously when handed Personality Supplement Pill. Subject asked for glass of water and pretended to swallow PSP, but then, with excessive casualness, moved to nearest waste disposal unit. There he raised cup to mouth a second time. Subject then opened chute and threw cup in. Believe he spit PSP back into cup before placing cup in disposal.

Recommendation: Will continue to observe Rob-R closely. I'm sure he'll slip up. They always slip up.

In addition to the ILTR, loyalty officers often receive special weapons (rapid-fire laser cannons, vapo-guns, tacnukes and so on) in case they uncover a Really Big Commie Plot. Really Big Commie Plots require Really Big Weapons.

Debriefing

After the mission, hold a special Loyalty Transcript De-briefing (LTD) between The Computer and the surviving Troubleshooters. During this LTD the loyalty officer reads each pertinent ILTR entry aloud and gives his opinion. Yes, that's right, in the presence of the other Troubleshooters.

Encourage your loyalty officer to make wild accusations by prompting him with simple positive remarks. 'An excellent observation, citizen. Please elaborate further.' – 'Would you recommend termination or will brainscrub be sufficient?' Of course, the accused may get hostile but that can be handled easily:

Loyalty Officer: And so I believe Patsy-R was responsible –

Patsy-R: Why you traitorous –!

The Computer: Citizen! Interrupting your loyalty officer during the LTD is bad manners. Would you like to continue in this obviously insubordinate activity?

Patsy-R: Gulp!

When your loyalty officer is on a roll, hit him with some tougher questions. 'What about Ryan-R-LKJ-2? Surely you didn't miss his involvement in that destructive explosion in TFR Sector? And concerning certain actions by Julian-R...'

Let the other Troubleshooters rebuff or substantiate any charges – but beware! If you are not really careful, the LTD might degenerate into a regular fire fight. We wouldn't want that to happen. No.

A typical loyalty officer non-conversation

Equipment Guy: So we're supposed to wait for the signal, then charge the front entrance?

Hygiene Officer: Yeah, that's right.

Loyalty Officer: [*Nonchalantly leaning closer and writing in his ILTR.*]

Equipment Guy: We're outgunned 50 to one! We're dead!

Hygiene Officer: Maybe, Unless we don't charge, 'cause you decide to do an Equipment Check just as the signal sounds?

Loyalty Officer: [*Scribbling furiously.*]

Equipment Guy: [*Whispering.*] But it's our job to distract the Commies!

Hygiene Officer: But how can we do that if our weapons don't work? [*Wink, wink.*]

Loyalty Officer: [*Scribbling more furiously.*]

Equipment Guy: But what if someone finds out?

Hygiene Officer: After the fire fight there ain't gonna be no one left but us. So who's gonna tell? I'm not telling. You're not telling. And vat-brain here hasn't said a word the entire mission. [*They turn to look at the loyalty officer.*]

Loyalty Officer: [*Tunelessly whistles and smiles innocently.*]

Hygiene officer

The hygiene officer makes sure that Troubleshooters look sharp – buttons buttoned, uniform pressed, teeth waxed.



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Failure by the hygiene officer to maintain an acceptable Team Hygiene Level can lead to unsuccessful missions. Dirty hands can slip on laser triggers; bad breath can alert enemies to your presence; wrinkled overalls can lower team morale to the breaking point.

So be a loyal citizen and give your hygiene officer a hand. Show him all filth, grime and potential dirt you discover. Thank you for your cooperation.

The Hygiene Officer: Clean and Mean

Impress on the player how vital the hygiene officer is to the team. Make him feel important. Make him feel really important. Make him feel more important than the team leader. Tell him about the sweeping power of his position and his authority to make any Troubleshooter submit to a Personal Hygiene Test (PHT). Tell him about his right to initiate Emergency Sanitation Procedures on any citizen who fails the Personal Hygiene Test.

The Personal Hygiene Test

The main duty of the hygiene officer is to perform PHTs. A PHT is an intensive physical inspection used to determine if a citizen meets the Minimum Cleanliness Level (MCL). Any citizen that fails a PHT must undergo an immediate Emergency Sanitation Procedure (ESP).

When can the hygiene officer demand a PHT? He can't just call for a PHT any time, can he? He couldn't order a character to stop whatever he was doing and take a PHT right now, could he? Sure he could!

The Personal Hygiene Test can be as complicated or as simple a process as the hygiene officer wants to make it. If he wants to be really annoying, he can do complete body inspections (be careful with enthusiastic roleplayers) and give lectures on citizen hygiene. Or he can just get down to the nitty-gritty and take a Skin-Core Sample (SCS).

A Skin-Core Sample?

Isn't that dangerous?

Well, normally, yes. But don't worry, the safety-conscious R&D engineers have developed an invention guaranteed

to take an SCS quickly and painlessly. It's called a Skin-Core Sampler Type 6 (SCS-6).

This device takes minute tissue samples and determines their chemical structure (i.e. the ratio of skin to dirt). The SCS-6 recommends Emergency Sanitation if there is too much dirt in the tissue sample.

The SCS-6 is a long, flat belt that wraps around any portion of a citizen's body. On the side of the belt that touches flesh is a metal contraption which closely resembles a small hydraulic post-hole digger. This digger is, in turn, wired to a hand-held control panel. The control panel has three features: a red button labelled **ACTIVATE**; a dial numbered 5 to 100 labelled **DEPTH**; and a blank screen labelled **'FINAL ANALYSIS'**.

Using the Skin-Core Sampler

First, explain to your hygiene officer how the Skin-Core Sampler works: 'Wrap it around an arm or leg and turn it on. Then just wait a few seconds and the machine will tell you if the subject needs Emergency Sanitation.'

Of course, you may want to warn the hygiene officer that Troubleshooters often experience unnecessary trauma when they are about to have an SCS taken. But with just a little coaching the hygiene officer can reassure his fellow Troubleshooter.

Troubleshooter: Are you sure you know how to use that thing?

Hygiene Officer: Hey, don't worry about it. The boys in R&D assured me that this model will work fine. No problems at all, any more. They rechecked the blade and even adjusted the depth setting!

Once the SCS-6 is attached, ask the hygiene officer what depth he is going to set it at. (Note: The depth setting measures molecules, so even at maximum depth the machine will only take a tiny fraction of the top layer of skin – but do not tell him that.)

Then he can turn on the machine. A low whistle comes from the Skin-Core Sampler, gradually getting louder and louder. Tell everyone it sounds like a laser on overload. After that, start counting down from five.

Assuming the Troubleshooter has not pulled the thing off, when the SCS stops humming, the sample is collected. Does the panicky Troubleshooter have a big hole in his arm or leg? No – but don't rush to tell him.

The last step is to evaluate the SCS-6 analysis. Roll 1d20 and consult this chart to determine what message appears on the Skin-Core Sampler Mark 6 control panel.

Depth Control Panel Reading

1-5: Insufficient data, reset and try again

6-10: Initiate Emergency Sanitation Procedures

11-20: Subject meets Minimum Cleanliness Level

If the SCS-6 does recommend ESP, the hygiene officer can execute one or more of the following procedures:

1. *Place a priority call to Citizen Cleanliness Central (CCC). A Citizen Cleanliness Bot (kind of a cross between a side-loader washer and a pro wrestler) arrives in minutes, grabs the citizen and stuffs him inside his cleaning compartment for a quick two-minute wash and spin-dry. (Probably best in a Zap game.)*

2. *Spray the offender with his choice of overall body cleansers. (CCC recommends New Perma Scent.)*

3. *Administer the experimental Clean-It-Up pill. No one is sure just what this does but after the Troubleshooter takes it, bubbles come out of his mouth and his hair smells minty fresh.*

For the record, the SCS-6 never experiences any of the problems of its predecessors (SCS-1 through 5). It never explodes, refuses to turn off or digs too deep. Nope, never. The Mark 6 works perfectly, just like everything else that comes out of R&D.

Other hygiene duties

In addition to PHTs, the hygiene officer has two other duties:

Organising Emergency Cleaning Crews:

The hygiene officer has the right to form Emergency Cleaning Crews (ECC) to combat Commie filth and general untidiness. Whenever the team encounters an area of Alpha Complex

that does not meet Minimum Cleanliness Levels (such as a battle site), the hygiene officer temporarily assumes command. His orders must be obeyed until every last bit of trash is deposited in a proper receptacle.

The crew can be made up of any citizens in the area or members of the Troubleshooter team. Besides all the fun open to players, this also provides the GM with another neat activity for Troubleshooters – they can be drafted by a hygiene officer from another team!

Personal Hygiene Maintenance: The first step in the never-ending fight against Commie dirt is continuous Preventive Hygiene Maintenance (PHM). PHM is a regimen of grooming procedures that the hygiene officer must enforce during the mission. Here is a list of some of the special equipment the hygiene officer receives to accomplish this task:

PDT Brand Tongue Scraper and Vehicle De-Icer.

New Meltdown Mouthscrub: Fight Decay! Melt Plaque Away!

Soften-It-Up Eyedrops: With New Extra-Mild Abrasives!

Blast Them Off Shampoo: Kills Germs* and Leaves Hair Shiny!

** Germs are very tiny Commie mutant traitors.*

A typical hygiene officer conversation

Hygiene Officer: Listen buddy, you gotta take a PHT.

Troubleshooter: It wasn't my fault! He pushed me into a vat of –

Hygiene Officer: Are ya gonna take the PHT or should we just skip to Emergency Sanitation?

Troubleshooter: No really, I'll be fine as soon as I wipe this stuff off my –

Hygiene Officer: That's it. Hold him down while I get a sample.

Troubleshooter: Hey, what are you doing? Get that thing off –!

Other Troubleshooter: Is it safe to attach it to his head?

Hygiene Officer: Well, they recommend an arm or a leg, in case it goes a little too deep. But when they start kicking...

Comms & Recording Officer

The communications and recording officer is key to team survival. Whenever he points his multicorder at you, everything you say, do or even think (depending on the multicorder program) is recorded for later examination by The Computer. Special editing techniques and camera angles can mean the difference between promotion and termination.

If the C&R officer asks you to hold a klieg light, respond speedily regardless of your current assignment. If he asks you to speak into the microphone, speak cheerfully and use good diction.

You can aid your C&R officer by pointing out scenes he should film. Help him get close-ups of raging infernos. Use your own initiative and invite those Vulture Squadron goons over for an interview. Be helpful! An artistic mission record is the product of a dedicated team – not just one citizen!

The Communications and Recording Officer: Lights! Camera! Action!

The C&R officer is the Troubleshooters' direct link to The Computer. It is this citizen's job to create the mission record using the latest technology and to constantly maintain communication with The Computer.

Now stop and think. The Computer is everywhere, recording everything, right? So why does it need a Troubleshooter running around with a hand-held camera and microphone? Logically, it does not. But we know The Computer often has slight, ah, lapses in security, leaving it with what HPD & Mind Control terms 'limited omnipotence.'

On one mission the C&R officer is redundant, as The Computer already has a complete record from other sources. On another mission, however, the C&R officer's multicorder may be the only mission record available. (And of course that'll be the one time he forgot to take the lens cap off.)

The 'C' in C&R

The main function of the communications and recording officer is, as one might expect, to communicate with The Computer. Of course, all the Troubleshooters have PDCs that let them call The Computer in an instant. However, destroying a PDC or interfering with its communications is, for you, the work of a moment. ('Due to a minor cataclysm involving one of PLC's new super accelerated breeder-reactors, radiation has fried all PDC chips in this subsector.') So the C&R officer has the only shielded com unit.

It is now his responsibility to pass along all contact with and from The Computer. This could be an extremely powerful duty, in as much as it leaves the Communications officer in complete control of questions to The Computer, advice from The Computer and reports of treasonous activity by other members of the team. We are sure he will relay all messages word-for-word, clearly and without delay. Gosh, what a nice citizen!

Art or Documentary?

The other important duty of the C&R officer is keeping the mission record. The Computer is very anxious to get a complete and interesting mission record.

One choice the C&R officer must make concerns style. Will he be a newscaster type, reporting action as it happens in an official-sounding voice? Or will he be more like a director, staging scenes over and over to get the perfect shot? The Computer has no preference, so it is up to the player.

The multicorder

The C&R officer should take a moment to examine his most important piece of equipment, the multicorder. You can get more information on multicorders than you ever thought possible, simply by reading the Equipment chapter. Briefly, there are two multicorder models that might be assigned to a mission. The Multicorder 1 is small, light-weight and can run only one sensor program at a time. The Multicorder 2 is larger, bulkier and can run three programs. Most C&R officers will be issued a Multicorder 1.



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One standard-issue program is the visible light sensor. Remind the C&RO this includes magnification enhancers and filters for those 'artsie' shots and infrared for really 'artsie' shots. However, the most common program used is the recorder, which is a standard colour audio-video camera. R&D is reportedly working on a smell-sensor program for inclusion on future missions. At your discretion, multiple programs can be issued, thus giving your C&RO some flexibility when filming. For example:
Recording Officer: I tink for dis shot, I will use ze infrared wid a blue filter.

The C&R officer should get used to handling the multicorder as quickly as possible. Encourage him to experiment, stick the camera in citizen's faces and generally be a nuisance. If he seems reluctant to make as big a nuisance of himself as you want, have The Computer gently remind him that he is really not doing his job. For instance:

The Computer: Your multicorder is not on, recording officer. Can you explain why your multicorder is not on?

C&RO: Well... the mission hasn't started yet, Friend Computer.

The Computer: Odd. According to the mission record, it began several minutes ago.

C&RO: But if I'm the one making the record and my multicorder is off, how can there be a mission record? There must be an error, Friend Computer.

The Computer: Did you say error, citizen?

C&RO: Gulp!

Filming on location

How does all this work on a mission? If the C&R officer is not hopping around like a reporter from *The Enquiring Citizen* then give him some encouragement.

The Computer: Excuse me, citizen, but are you sure the lighting is adequate? Are you willing to stake your life on it?

If he's doing a good job, reward him:

The Computer: Excellent work, citizen. An Official Commendation for that last panoramic view of the crash site has been entered into your permanent record.

Do not let the C&R officer neglect sound. Sound is very important to The

Computer. If something is garbled, the C&R officer should re-shoot, re-staging the scene where necessary. This will give the other Troubleshooters a wonderful opportunity to reconsider their treasonous statements of a moment ago.

Remind the C&R officer he is not in this alone. The other Troubleshooters should be just as eager to see a scene re-shot as he is and the C&R officer always has the power to draft someone to help point spotlights, apply makeup or portray the now-vaporised villain.

Of course, if something vital comes up, like a fire fight with Commie mutants, the C&R officer should drop everything to help, right?

Don't be silly. He should keep on shooting with his multicorder. Just because a fellow waving a camera, pointing a light and shouting directions through a megaphone makes a wonderful target is no reason to ignore The Computer's orders (although especially enthusiastic C&R officers have been known to squeeze off a few laser blasts with their left hand).

A typical C & R conversation

C&R Officer: Citizen Patsy-R! Please come over here and point this klieg light at our illustrious leader. I want a good shot of the burn marks.

Patsy-R: Are you crazy? If I stand up, those Commies will nail me! *[Laser blast crackles overhead.]*

C&R Officer: Citizen, surely you realise that failure to comply with an MBD officer in performance of his duty is treasonous.

Patsy-R: *[Another bolt blasts nearby wall.]* Forget it! Hey, Steve-O, do I have to do what this guy says?

Steve-O: I dunno.

Patsy-R: I want to call The Computer! You're trying to get me killed, you lousy traitorous Commie mutant scum!

C&R Officer: As communications officer, I'll be happy to forward your message to The Computer, citizen. Now, what was it you were saying?

Patsy-R: Hamana-hamana-hamana ...

Equipment guy

The **equipment guy** is responsible for the safety and care of all Computer property assigned to a Troubleshooter team.

Naturally, the equipment guy (EG) is highly skilled in the repair and maintenance of all forms of weapons, bots, vehicles and R&D devices. Feel free to ask his advice if you have a problem with a piece of equipment, or if you need an experimental R&D device demonstrated.

Also, be careful not to engage in activities that might damage your weapons, bots or vehicles.

Equipment guys are touchy about such things. For your own protection, inform your equipment guy whenever an item is malfunctioning, in need of preventive maintenance or makes you feel a bit uneasy.

He won't mind. It's his job.

The Equipment Guy: If It's Not Broken, Fix It

It is the equipment guy's duty to repair any vehicle, weapon, bot or device that malfunctions during the mission. Field repairs may not always be possible. In such instances the EG should ask The Computer for advice. For example:

Equipment Guy: *[Standing on the edge of the subterranean mineshaft.]* Due to Commie sabotage, defective floor material, code-named 'Gravel,' gave way beneath Docbot 6677-b, causing said bot to fall several thousand metres into Osmium Ore Procurement Shaft MNJ44. Said bot exploded on impact.

The Computer: Unfortunate. Please take a 'Gravel' sample and return all parts of Docbot 6677-b to YAK Sector Repair Facility.

Random Surprise Inspections

In addition to repairing items, a major equipment guy duty is the prevention of equipment failures. To accomplish this, the EG conducts frequent **Random Surprise Inspections** (RSI).

27 MANDATORY BONUS DUTY

As everyone knows, a Troubleshooter's high-tech equipment requires constant maintenance and upkeep. A skilled individual is needed to inspect the equipment regularly. Who better than the equipment guy?

To help prevent equipment failures the equipment guy is authorised to conduct Random Surprise Inspections. These inspections can involve a thorough examination of the entire team or just a quick Weapons Check (WC) of selected team members. Failure to cooperate with the equipment guy during RSI is treason.

Encourage your equipment guy to conduct RSIs frequently. Remind him it is his responsibility to keep the team's equipment operating smoothly. Reassure him of The Computer's faith.

Of course, the equipment guy must look for more than just signs of wear and tear. Suppose a Commie sympathiser infiltrates the group, sabotaging equipment and weapons? An RSI at an opportune moment might uncover a monstrous plot! Successfully uncovering monstrous plots often leads to Security Clearance promotions. Remember, no one can refuse an RSI. No one.

Equipment and Techniques

To better perform his duties, the equipment guy is issued a special R&D-designed Multipurpose Tool Kit (MTK) at the start of every mission. The MTK contains all of the standard tools that any Alpha Complex equipment guy needs to effect repairs (negative frequency ratchet, anti-grav lifters, geiger counter and so on).

The equipment guy and his MTK have a variety of responsibilities. Each is summarised below.

Weapons: Inspecting weapons is the equipment guy's most important duty. Without functioning weapons Alpha Complex is helpless against the Commie menace. Stress to your EG that it is his duty to prevent weapon malfunctions and to be constantly alert for signs of sabotage. Keeping close tabs on all weapons should occupy a large portion of his time. Failure to maintain the

team's weapons is treason of the highest order.

Bots: These are some of The Computer's most prized possessions and woe be to any EG who allows harm to come to one. Bots should be inspected regularly, just like weapons, to check for mechanical wear and tear and Commie sabotage. However, inspecting a bot can be a little more difficult than taking apart a laser.

Equipment Guy: Let me just, uh ...detach this Bot Brain Protector Plate.

Docbot: Are you certain that's – Ow! Ow! Ow!

Equipment Guy: Quiet, plasti-brain. Now for a quick scan of the – Oops.

Docbot: Aieeeee!

Equipment Guy: C'mon, I barely touched –

Docbot: Zzzzt ... phhttt ...

Equipment Guy: Hey, what the –?

Docbot: Exterminate! Exterminate! Eradicate all organic life forms!

Equipment Guy: Ow! Ow! Ow!

The equipment guy should also examine each bot's programming regularly. This is best done by asking the bot simple questions concerning its function and duty. *Caution:* Overly difficult or hypothetical questions could damage or alter a bot's programming.

Vehicles: The equipment guy is not only responsible for the care and maintenance for all vehicles assigned to the team but he is also the official team pilot/driver. Driving is a very important duty. Be sure to ask the EG to detail exactly which long knobs and little pedals he is twisting and pushing.

Of course, the EG can always assign someone else to driving duty but he is still responsible for damages – unless he can pin the blame on someone else. ('As the mission record clearly indicates, I specifically told Alonzo-R to increase the left mega-thruster output.')

Finally, because many vehicles have bot brains, the equipment guy gets to communicate with them and try to give them orders. The key word here is 'try'.

R&D: The EG must also ensure every piece of experimental R&D equipment assigned to the mission is tested at least once and that a full report of its

performance is submitted. Be sure to remind your equipment guy that testing experimental R&D stuff often brings commendations.

Newfound gains: Not only is the EG responsible for all equipment carried on the mission, he is also in charge of retrieving, identifying and repairing any items found along the way. Malfunctioning com units, nuclear reactors and Old Reckoning devices turn up in the strangest places. Failure to retrieve and test discovered devices is treason!

A Typical Equipment Guy Conversation

Equipment Guy: Hey, Morty-Y. How's it goin' in R&D?

Morty-Y: Oh, hi, citizen. Come for some more equipment?

EG: Sure thing! That last batch was great. *[Adjusts arm sling.]* I mean it!

Morty-Y: *[Glowing]* Really? Oooh, I have something really special for you this time! *[Adjusts glasses.]*

EG: Great, Morty-Y! I'll take two. Love your stuff! I mean it!

Morty-Y: *[Rapturously]* Seriously? You really mean it? Gosh, you're swell. Gee, uh, maybe I ought to warn you...

EG: *[Casually]* Mmm?

Morty-Y: Well... I'm not supposed to tell – but we are worried the gravity inverter mechanism might interfere with the user's, uh, brainwaves.

EG: You'd never do anything like that to me, pal. I'll field-test it for you and bring back a complete report real soon. I mean it.

Morty-Y: Gosh!

EG: *[Turning to another Troubleshooter.]* Hey, Gomer-R. You're a member of HPD & Mind Control, right?

Gomer-R: Yeah. Why?

EG: Congratulations, citizen! You've been chosen to field-test this mind-control helmet. Just put it on your head and turn the switch. Not now! Later, when we're in a room with low ceilings. Meanwhile, it's RSI time, everyone! Let's see those lasers double-quick!

Happiness officer

The **happiness officer** is essential to the success of a mission. By checking constantly for signs of Sub-Standard



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Morale (or SSM), the happiness officer keeps morale high and, more importantly, makes sure Troubleshooters have lots of fun.

If you feel down, tired or just plain bored, don't suffer in silence. Tell your happiness officer! He can cheer you up with a joke, a quick song or a variety of fun medications. And if he doesn't, just inform The Computer. That could be fun, too!

The happiness officer: No citizen left behind

Officially, the happiness officer (HO) is in charge of team morale. The HO monitors morale and, whenever a Troubleshooter suffers from Sub-Standard Morale (SSM), applies Morale Lifters (ML) to boost spirits and bring smiles to one and all. These MLs can take any of a number of forms – pharmaceuticals, jokes, pharmaceuticals, songs, pharmaceuticals, pep talks and on frequent occasions, pharmaceuticals.

In Computer terms, SSM means any citizen who is not in a state of euphoric glee. For example:

Happiness Officer: [Addressing two Troubleshooters scrubbing a food vat.] Greetings, citizens! Are you having fun?

Troubleshooter #1: Certainly, citizen! Scraping congealed, potentially toxic sediment off food vats is highly important! I feel privileged to serve The Computer in this capacity!

Happiness Officer: Excellent! And you, citizen, are you having fun?

Troubleshooter #2: Yeah... sure. Dumploads.

Troubleshooter #2 is obviously suffering from SSM. This is dangerous because Sub-Standard Morale is the largest single cause of mission disasters. SSM can cause a variety of additional problems, including vehicle malfunctions, weapon misfires, poor communications and back-aches. 63% of team leaders with a preference list it as the primary or secondary reason for a mission's failure.

Early Signs of Sub-Standard Morale:

To help in early detection of SSM, HPD&MC has made up a list of the warning signs of SSM Breakdown. Briefing officers should go over these warning signs with newly appointed

happiness officers. The fate of Alpha Complex depends on it.

Does the citizen in question:

1. **Argue excessively?**
2. **Refuse to volunteer for suicide missions?**
3. **Disregard the team leader's orders?**
4. **Suffer from insomnia?**
5. **Not laugh at the happiness officer's jokes?**
6. **Refuse to participate in the group singalongs?**
7. **Have a pouty puss?**
8. **Refuse to take Personality Stabiliser Drugs?**
9. **Show a definite lack of faith in The Computer's judgement?**
10. **Whine a lot?**

Any one of the above symptoms (including those not listed) is grounds for immediate Personality Adjustment. Sub-Standard Morale manifests in many other ways too. An experienced happiness officer learns to recognise SSM in all its forms.

Happiness is a serious business

The happiness officer's duties are twofold. First, he must prevent SSM by leading the Troubleshooters in frequent Pre-planned Spontaneous Activities (PSA): Group singalongs, vidshow trivia questions, jokes, rap sessions, co-ordinated cheers for The Computer, or anything else the HO feels will be loads of non-treasonous fun. Exactly which PSA the Troubleshooters engage in is up to the HO.

In sufficient quantity, Pre-planned Spontaneous Activities effectively prevent Sub-Standard Morale. By the same token, lack of PSA is seen as a deliberate attempt to induce SSM. This is bad. Tell your happiness officer about this. Drop subtle hints.

Of course, The Computer knows no citizen is perfect and cases of SSM may develop from time to time in spite of the HO's best efforts. This brings us to the second duty: SSM treatment.

Through years of experience, The Computer has learned there is only one effective cure for SSM: Personality

Stabiliser Drugs (PSDs). Impress on your players that loyal happiness officers always use PSDs to treat SSM. Let them know PSDs are considered 'normal' in Alpha Complex and failure to respond to SSM with PSDs is treason.

Which PSDs the happiness officer has is up to you. The two most common drugs are **E-Z-DUZ-IT** (qualine) and **Wider Awake** (xanitrack). For these and other pharmaceuticals, see the equipment chapter.

Rumours suggest PSDs occasionally get mislabelled. But we all know what rumours are.

Note: In our culture, drug therapy means teaching an individual how to cope with life without relying on drugs, a noble cause we Famous Game Designers heartily endorse. In Alpha Complex, however, drug therapy has a more literal meaning: teaching a citizen to cope *through the use* of drugs – a subtle but important difference.

A Typical Happiness Officer Conversation

Susan-R: Are you sure that was the right thing to do?

Happiness officer: Well, he looked so... *glum*. You know, all that moaning and groaning. I thought he'd bring down the rest of the team.

Susan-R: I guess so but maybe the docbot should have patched him up first. I mean, that autocannon hit him square in the chest!

Happiness officer: Trust me. He's fine. [Turns to wounded Troubleshooter Benjamin-R.] How you doin'?

Benjamin-R [Doing push-ups]: Great! I feel great! Never felt better! I love The Computer!!

Susan-R: You know, Benjamin-R, maybe you should keep quiet. After all, you're kinda, you know.... critically wounded.

Benjamin-R [now running in circles]: No, really, I feel great! Think we'll fight any Commies today? Huh? Think so? Huh?

Happiness officer: See, Susan-R? He's fine. Now, about this stress you're experiencing...

27. MANDATORY BONUS DUTY



Loyalty Officer

Congratulations, citizen! In recognition of your exemplary service, you have been chosen as **loyalty officer** for this mission. This appointment shows The Computer's special faith in you.

Your duties include watching your fellow Troubleshooters for signs of substandard zeal, recording and reporting any incidents of disloyalty and taking immediate corrective action when the opportunity arises.

You report directly to The Computer, not to your team leader. You must be ever vigilant. Any Troubleshooter can spot blatant Commie sabotage but it is *your* highly trained eye The Computer relies on to see Commie plots before they hatch.

Study **The 10 Early Warning Signs of Commie Traitorism**. Observe the other Troubleshooters. Note which ones have substandard zeal; which ones use irregular speech patterns; which ones act – *funny*. You are the eyes of The Computer, ever watchful, always observant, forever with your ear to the door.

Remember, only you can prevent Commie traitorism.



Happiness Officer

Congratulations, citizen! Due to your properly zealous attitude you have been chosen as **happiness officer**. This is a great honour. Only those who know the true joy of being an Alpha Complex citizen are appointed happiness officer. Your selection shows The Computer's exceptional faith in you.

As happiness officer it is your duty to keep team morale high and to motivate your fellow Troubleshooters with frequent pep talks, sing-a-longs and practical jokes.

In addition, you must constantly be on the alert for **SSM** (Sub-Standard Morale) among your fellow Troubleshooters. Here are some early warning signs of SSM: argumentativeness, a reluctance to volunteer, questioning the team leader, habitual frowning when you tell jokes and a refusal to participate in group sing-a-longs.

As happiness officer you are authorised to give PSDs (Personality Stabiliser Drugs) to any Troubleshooter who shows signs of SSM. You will be given a variety of PSDs for dispensing. Failure to treat SSM is treason! Remember, laugh and the whole Complex laughs with you, cry and you fry alone.



Team Leader

Congratulations, citizen! Because of your unique abilities you have been selected to serve as **team leader**. This is a vital assignment and your selection demonstrates The Computer's exceptional faith in you.

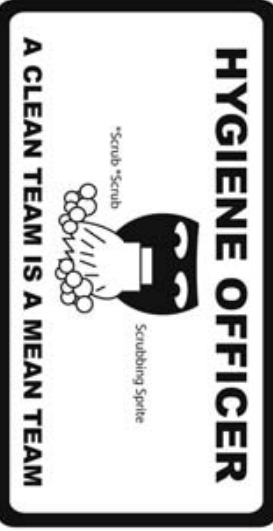
As team leader you must coordinate the efforts of your fellow Troubleshooters, using their diverse talents and skills to successfully complete your mission assignment. To this end, The Computer has provided you with all necessary equipment. However, if you feel The Computer may have overlooked some of your needs, please do not hesitate to point this out.

At times your team may engage in combat with evil Commie mutant traitors. In such situations your superior tactical knowledge will determine the outcome of the battle. Deploy your team carefully. Keep those fire lanes clear!

Your badge depicts you as the centre of your team, with your expertise and knowledge radiating as inspiration to all. The Computer stands ready to assist you in these tasks. Good luck, citizen! The sensors of The Computer are upon you.



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Hygiene Officer

Your MBD is team **hygiene officer**. This is a solemn honour. Only the most trusted servants of The Computer serve as hygiene officer.

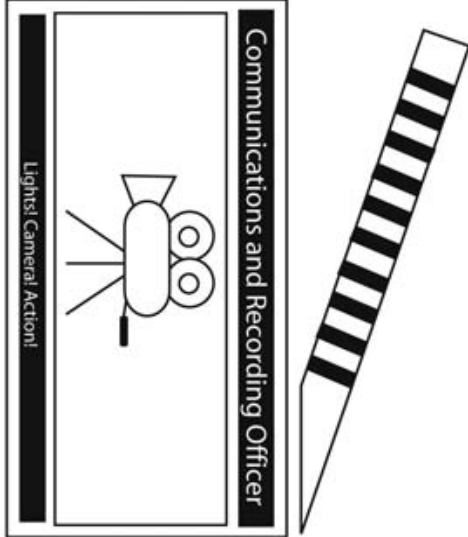
Yours are the duties of **The Scrubbing Helmet**, that legendary bastion of clean corridors and well-flopped Troubleshooters. Serve his memory well!

Your responsibilities include monitoring the **PHL** (Personal Hygiene Level) of each team member, reporting when a Troubleshooter fails his **PHT** (Personal Hygiene Test) and implementing **ESP** (Emergency Sanitation Procedures) against any and all offenders.

To aid you, The Computer has generously provided you a **PHTCMK** (Personal Hygiene Test and Cleanliness Maintenance Kit) for performing PHTs and ESPs on your fellow Troubleshooters. Consult your briefing officer for instructions.

Take your duty seriously. Recent team leader post-mission reports indicate 52% of all mission disasters can be blamed on hygiene neglect by the hygiene officer. Failure to report sub-standard PHLs is treason.

Remember, **ACTIAMT**: A Clean Team Is A Mean Team!



C&R Officer

Congratulations, citizen! Your Mandatory Bonus Duty for this mission is **communications and recording officer** (C&RO). Your two-fold assignment is a high honour and a sign of The Computer's trust in you.

As *communications officer*, it is your job to handle the **com unit**. This is important, as (in the event of personal communication device malfunction) it is your team's only link to the benevolent wisdom of The Computer. Interpret The Computer's instructions and relay questions and information to The Computer. Handle this duty wisely!

As *recording officer*, you are in charge of the all-important **multicorder**. Use it to record the mission in exciting detail in 156-bit colour with state-of-the-art sound fidelity. Use close-ups, exotic lighting, scenes shot in infrared and in-depth interviews with suspected traitors. Missing a scene is treason. Re-stage exciting moments you may have overlooked. Your recordings may end up on the evening vidshows for all of Alpha Complex to see!

Take your duty seriously. Recent team leader reports indicate 61% of all mission disasters can be blamed on the C&RO's failure to keep an accurate mission record.

The Computer is everywhere – but you must be everywhere else! Don't let The Computer down!



Equipment guy

Congratulations, Troubleshooter! You have been selected as the bots, weapons, vehicles and sundry equipment repair and maintenance officer, colloquially known as the **equipment guy**. The Computer trusts you! Why else would you be responsible for every piece of assigned mission equipment?

A *equipment guy*, you have many responsibilities. You must regularly and punctually carry out **RSIs** (Random Surprise Inspections). Collect all weapons and equipment your fellow Troubleshooters carry and check each item for signs of wear, misuse and sabotage. If you find evidence of sabotage or tampering, report it immediately to your loyalty officer or team leader or directly to The Computer. You will be soundly rewarded for your efforts.

It is also your duty to see that all **R&D devices** assigned to the team are tested, **bots** have their protective asimov circuits checked regularly and all **vehicles** perform as intended.

If your team comes across an **Old Reckoning device**, you are responsible for obtaining it and returning it to The Computer for analysis.

Finally, you serve as **team driver/pilot**, except on those occasions you feel it necessary to appoint someone else to this task.

Remember, if it's not broken, fix it!

28. THE MISSION SCHEME

Instructions for preparing MBD badges

1. Photocopy the MBD badges. We generously give you permission to photocopy these badges for personal use only. Unauthorised use is treason.
2. Cut out and fold the badge. CUT along the dashed line, then FOLD along the solid line. DO NOT CUT along the solid line and FOLD along the dashed line, or you'll screw up the whole thing and your players will laugh at you.
3. Tape the open sides of the badge together.
4. Present the badges to your players with a safety pin or similar instrument. Have each player, under your solicitous observation, pin the badge to him- or herself in a location visible to all players.

28. The Mission Scheme

All **PARANOIA** missions follow a standard scheme. Roughly, missions work like so:

The Troubleshooters receive a **mission alert**. It informs them The Computer and Alpha Complex once again require their services and it summons them to a briefing where the specific nature of that service may be discussed in private.

The Troubleshooters go to the **briefing**. A briefing officer, sometimes supervised by or replaced by The Computer, tells them what they have to do.

The Troubleshooters go try to do what they have been told. They always have plenty of exciting adventures. Time passes. The body count rises. When the GM runs out of mission or the players run out of clones, the mission ends.

When (if) they complete their mission, the survivors attend a **debriefing** where they report the results of their mission, get praised and rewarded for their loyal service and then accuse each other straight to the termination centre.

It sounds so simple. Somehow it always gets complicated. Each stage in the mission always seems to get more complex than it has any right to be. Terrible things happen over and over again. We just can't understand it. You'd

almost think mission designers and Gamemasters were trying to get the poor Troubleshooters killed.

Players become familiar with the mission scheme over time. You don't want to let them become too familiar with it; if they learn what to expect, the element of paranoia is lost. Give them the familiar – then distort it in some appalling and humorous fashion.

Missions

The mission itself is the narrative thread, the central core of the mission. In most roleplaying missions (and most narrative genres, like books and films), the narrative thread is really important. A problem is set up in the beginning and everybody is in suspense until the end, hoping to find out how the problem is solved.

Well, it works that way in **PARANOIA** sometimes but as often as not, the central problem is either insoluble, imaginary or completely bogus and most events during the mission have nothing to do with that problem.

For example, fantasy literature and roleplaying games often centre around some important quest to find a princess or grab some fabulous loot or achieve peace in our time or something. Space opera literature and roleplaying games

often centre around overthrowing evil empires or slaughtering nasty aliens or grabbing fabulous loot or searching for ancient astronauts or something. In a horror game there might be an intricate conspiracy and the investigators uncover it a layer at a time, like peeling an onion.

In **PARANOIA** there is always the mission but no one (except The Computer) ever takes it all that seriously. And for good reason. Most missions are suicide festivals, wild bot chases, programming errors or conspiracies so intricate and obscure even the GM doesn't understand them. Often the PCs are not supposed to, or even allowed to, achieve the mission's objectives. Often they cannot even understand the objectives. Where a horror adventure is about carefully peeling an onion, a **PARANOIA** mission is about laser-blasting the onion to cinders.

That's **PARANOIA** for you. The central narrative is not all that central. Often it is just an excuse to get the characters out into a hallway where they can shoot at each other while they are run over by transbots and incinerated by malfunctioning suit heaters and sniped at by traitors and cheerfully bullied by their friend The Computer and all its little playmates.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

The **PARANOIA** series

Some roleplaying game fans assert **PARANOIA** doesn't permit an ongoing 'campaign' of linked missions with a continuing cast of Player Characters. How could it, when they die so often? The game is fine for a change of pace, they say, but that is all. In response, other fans point to their own long-running **PARANOIA** games.

The campaign concept remains controversial among experienced Gamemasters. We never disagree with any GM, because the GM is always right. But we can pass along suggestions to make anti-campaign GMs even righter than before.

First, 'campaign' connotes a grand scale, an over-arching plot developing from story to story. The PCs initiate or get caught up in mysterious early events; gradually the GM reveals the bigger picture. In Alpha Complex there is no picture. There is only a constantly shifting zone of crisis immediately surrounding the PCs, with utter darkness beyond. So the word 'campaign' doesn't really fit. How about 'miniseries'?

Second, what about the fatality rate? Easy: Treat the players themselves as the continuing characters. A player has one Troubleshooter now; he'll have another next time; so what? Let all his characters know what he knows. Let the player carry his knowledge of deathtraps and proper conduct forward from one Troubleshooter to the next. Is that any more implausible than the whole identical-clone-backups device?

In **PARANOIA**, unlike a lot of other (non-fun) RPGs, many players regard their characters not as roles to play but as mere puppets or placeholders. This is fine – in fact, it may be the best way to play. The Computer requires all Alpha Complex citizens to think and behave pretty much alike. So regardless of his PC's specific background, a player has ample rationale to just play the character as if he himself, the player, were there in the briefing rooms and corridors, doing what he himself would do. This works out well, as long as the player feels the fear and insanity of the setting.

Then, too, there are ways to keep even individual Troubleshooters alive. Under the Straight rules for treason accusation and clone backups, experienced and careful players can keep their characters around long enough to reach decently high Clearances. At that level the nature of the game shifts to a less immediately deadly form. Future **PARANOIA** releases will cover mid Clearance **BLUE** agents and – gasp – High Programmers!

So it is not inherently crazy to envision a long series of related games. The players see more of The Computer's varying personalities; they hear more about the high Clearance celebrities of the Complex and maybe even meet them; they come to appreciate perks like real food that are meaningful only in the longer term; and they learn at every new clearance, as the fruit of long experience, to stay alert – and to trust no one – and to keep their laser handy.

The incidental horrors that befall the characters are the real meat of a **PARANOIA** mission.

If you are stuck for a putative mission, roll on the **What's Going On** and **What's Really Going On** tables on page 155. Note that the two tables are not linked in any way, demonstrating the absolute irrelevance of the actual 'plot' – it's all about pushing the Troubleshooters into death-traps and prisoner's dilemmas.

'Another proud citizen volunteers for Troubleshooter duty.'



28 THE MISSION SCHEME

What's Going On?

- 1 Commie Mutant Traitors are plotting to sabotage this sector's Spontaneous Loyalty Demonstration planned for tomorrow. Investigate and terminate the Commies.
- 2 Congratulations! We need you to guard this Very Important Location/Item/Person.
- 3 The vital widget in a very dangerous place has broken down. Here's a replacement widget – go fix it. Don't worry, I'm sure the loss of the widget won't cause any problems.
- 4 Deliver this ominous, ticking package to a sensitive location. Ask no questions.
- 5 Sabotage has resulted in an R&D experiment getting loose. Kill those mutant monkeys.
- 6 We've had to terminate the committee responsible for some abstruse function within Alpha Complex. Even though you have no applicable skills or training and don't have the Clearance to know what the committee does, we need you to take over.
- 7 We've detected signs of clear subversive activity in this sector. Find the traitors and bring them to justice!
- 8 We need you to infiltrate a suspected Commie base Outdoors. You must locate the base, get inside and then plant this homing beacon so our Warbot can eliminate it.
- 9 Investigate the suspicious death of a high Clearance citizen.
- 10 We suspect that there's a traitor in a Service Group in this sector. Your job is to identify and remove the traitor without impacting the vital functions of the Group.
- 11 A high Clearance citizen needs your help with his latest dinner party/round of UltraGolf/nefarious secret project.
- 12 Congratulations! You have been selected as test pilots for this glorious new experimental device. It is designed to go into orbit/back in time/to another dimension/boom.
- 13 You have been assigned as a focus group to help HPD&MC come up with a new vidshow to keep the INFRAREDs in line.
- 14 PLC want you to conduct a series of blind taste tests with classic B3 and new flavour B3. Ignore all rumours that new flavour causes spontaneous mutation.
- 15 Assess the contents of weapons depot warehouse #743.
- 16 Known Commie Mutant Traitor Bert-Y has escaped. Track him down and terminate him.
- 17 A cache of Old Reckoning artefacts was discovered by a construction team. Secure the cache and ensure nothing was stolen.
- 18 There is a problem with the plumbing in the sewers. Unplug the blockage with this mininuke. Watch out for sewer monsters in the Underplex.
- 19 The vending machine in this sector is out of Sour Lime flavoured algae chips. Find out who is responsible and eliminate them!
- 20 Roll again twice.

What's Really Going On!

- 1 One High Programmer is trying to embarrass or discredit another, causing the cover situation.
- 2 An ambitious mid Clearance citizen is trying to advance by secretly causing a disaster, then heroically and very publicly saving the day.
- 3 Cutbacks, incompetence or paranoia have resulted in something going horribly wrong.
- 4 It is all cover for some convoluted Internal Security scheme to uncover non-existent traitors.
- 5 One of the Secret Societies is engaged in a war with another Society.
- 6 It's all a big miscommunication caused by inadequate Security Clearances or paranoia.
- 7 The new, shiny, highly experimental weapon or project has gone out of control.
- 8 The Computer was hacked by Computer Phreaks/Illuminati/High Programmers, causing the problem.
- 9 The Troubleshooters are being used as guinea pigs in an experiment
- 10 The actual problem has been exaggerated hundreds of times over, attracting the attention of far more important and powerful agencies than it deserves.
- 11 A High Programmer or other senior official screwed up and is trying to bury the evidence.
- 12 A High Programmer or other senior official is trying to screw over his competitors and acquire some important item or information.
- 13 The whole thing is just an extensive loyalty test – either for the Troubleshooters, or someone else.
- 14 Something happened, no-one's sure what it was.
- 15 A powerful mutant – a Machine Empath, Telepath or something weirder – has arisen and is using his powers to manipulate events.
- 16 The whole thing is due to spies from another Alpha Complex.
- 17 The Computer's at fault – its left CompNode did not know what its right CompNode was doing
- 18 Nothing's going on at all but the Troubleshooters who failed the last mission created this bogeyman to blame all their failures on.
- 19 Some part of Alpha Complex's decaying infrastructure broke down, causing a string of problems.
- 20 Roll again twice.



29. Mission Alerts

A mission alert is a Troubleshooter's summons to duty. The Computer may broadcast a mission alert over public address systems or com units (and feel free to bellow cheerfully in your best football-stadium announcer voice) or, if the summons is confidential, dispatch it via messenger or through a PDC or nearby monitor.

It can be fun, especially with new player groups, to look in on each individual character as he receives the mission alert. Ask each player what he thinks his Troubleshooter is doing. Is he working at his Service Group? Browsing C-Bay for a particular gadget? Working up a credit-making scheme? These are little slices of normal life, or what passes for it, in Alpha Complex. To you it does not actually matter what the character is doing, because he darn well better drop it right now and answer the alert.

The mission alert is our answer to the disconcerting unease we experienced GMs used to have in other (non-fun) roleplaying games when we announced the nature of the evening's adventure. We were always concerned the players would simply refuse to do what we wanted them to do, because they knew it was dangerous and probably not in their characters' best interests, anyway. 'Phooey. Take the stupid ring to the Cracks of Doom yourself. Who cares? I'm going to hang around town and butcher orcs.'

Nobody refuses mission alerts. This is The Computer talking. Everyone always cooperates, cheerfully and enthusiastically.

Here are some common features of mission alerts:

- ☞ **A mission reference code or codename:** For instance, Mission Three-Ex-Eff Dash One-Four-Niner, or mission code *Evinrude*. Maybe the characters should memorise the code. Suppose some high muckety-muck or IntSec **GREEN** goon demanded it? How could they prove they are on official business without it? What if the code is incomplete, garbled or inaccurate?

- ☞ **A brief description of the nature of the mission:** For instance, 'Find and apprehend citizen,' 'Treason in progress!' 'Investigate disturbance in outer space.' These are frequently incomplete, garbled, inaccurate, obscure or purposely misleading. Doesn't matter. You've got to do it, whatever it is. Or isn't.

- ☞ **Location of the briefing and identity of the briefing officer:** These are important; otherwise, you don't know where to show up for the briefing. Failure to show up for a briefing is treason. What if two digits in the room number were transposed? Or the typist's fingers were one key to the left on the keyboard when the whole message was typed up – makes it kind of hard to read. Or if there is no such room? The Troubleshooters could request confirmation or assistance from The Computer or other citizens but there is no guarantee it won't be equally garbled, misleading, or inaccurate. Sometimes The Computer and its servants get huffy if you have not been paying proper attention to the mission alert. Maybe your clone backup will be more attentive.

- ☞ **A stirring appeal to the troubleshooters' loyalty and dedication:** For instance, 'You have been generously permitted another opportunity to serve The Computer and Alpha Complex.' This is generally an opportunity to display the correct degree of fervent enthusiasm. 'Oh, boy. A mission! What fun! And a chance to serve my friend The Computer! Oh, thank you thank you thank you!' Remember, failure to be happy is treason.

- ☞ **A misleading or ironic understatement of the mission's dangers:** For instance, 'I have the greatest confidence in this mission, Dave-R. Don't worry. Everything is just fine.' This is a charming feature of The Computer's cheerful, positive style – everything in Alpha Complex is safe, easy and fun. As a result, Troubleshooters automatically

assume everything is much worse than they are told. Even then, they are being optimistic.

Random Mission Alert Delivery

- 1-5 Text message on PDC
- 6-10 Courier brings the message, either (1-10) verbally or (11-20) hardcopy. The courier may be an Internal Security spy, Secret Society agent or a saboteur.
- 11 Announced over public address loudspeakers.
- 12 Special breaking news bulletin in the middle of a vidshow.
- 13 Mission is randomly assigned as a prize in a CruncheeTym algae chips packet.
- 14 Relayed via high-frequency radio that resonates with the Troubleshooters' teeth fillings.
- 15 Relayed by The Computer in a confession booth.
- 16 Assigned by a passing high Clearance citizen.
- 17 Via telepathic communication from unidentifiable source. The Computer knows nothing of this method and will regard it with extreme suspicion but the mission is officially assigned to the Troubleshooters and should not be ignored.
- 18 Anonymous hardcopy message slipped under the door.
- 19 CourierBot delivers the mission. The bot is (1-10) functional, (11-15) damaged, (16-18) hacked by a conspirator), (19-20) self-destructing in 5, 4, 3...
- 20 Troubleshooters are kidnapped by jackbooted goons and dragged to the briefing room.

30. BRIEFINGS

30. Briefings

Briefings generally take place in a briefing room. However, field briefings can take place anywhere – in corridors, zooming autocars or metre-diameter tunnels in the bowels of Alpha Complex.

The briefing officer(s) delivers details of the mission cleared for Troubleshooter ears and answers questions the Troubleshooters are bold or foolish enough to ask.

Briefing officers speak from strongly defended positions and usually bring imposing guards, guardbots or automatic security systems, present for the very purpose of annihilating Troubleshooters who are surly, uncooperative, or disloyal, or whose jumpsuits are not neatly pressed. Lots of Troubleshooters die in briefing rooms.

Briefing: Mission details

At the briefing the officer (sometimes with The Computer's assistance) gives the Troubleshooters details of their mission. Occasionally some details are accurate and reliable. Occasionally the briefing officer is not teetering on the brink of insanity, involved in some nefarious plot to sabotage the mission or completely misinformed. Occasionally.

Often at this point the briefing officer or The Computer selects the mission team leader. You can give the MBD Determination Test at this point if you wish.

Then the official gives the team their mission orders. These usually include the objectives of the mission and special directions or restraints they must observe. Some officers now give individual Troubleshooters a chance to ask questions but generally briefing officers are not big on answering.

Briefing: Outfitting

In the next stage of the briefing, the officer directs the mission team to secure the equipment The Computer has assigned for this mission. The assigned equipment list may be a fixed, formal manifest or just a general advisory.

The officer may instruct Troubleshooters to report to a certain PLC warehouse or he may assign a credit budget to the team leader's ME Card to let the team buy equipment on their own, either from official PLC personal goods stores, from C-Bay or other auction sites or (an unstated suggestion may hang heavy in the air) from the illegal IR Market.

Briefing: Service Service

For the final stage of the briefing, The Computer (or less often, the briefing officer) directs the mission team to perform some additional duty for one or another Service Group. The traditional form of this 'service service' requires the

team to stop by an R&D lab to pick up experimental equipment for field testing. However any Service Group may provide a specific mission's service service.

The briefing authorities may conclude by ordering the team to seek out various experts, informants or resource specialists in preparing for the mission. Sometimes The Computer assigns these specialists to the team in an advisory or leadership role.

Then the authorities open the door, kick out the Troubleshooters and vanish. It is time to start.



'Pay attention during the briefing. There'll be an interrogation later.'



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Random Briefing

- 1 Briefing officer is behind opaque bulletproof glass, his voice electronically filtered.
- 2 Briefing officer is undercover, wary, paranoid and speaks in evasive code-phrases.
- 3 Briefing officer is weird invalid (e.g. suspended in sound-dampening gel in a vat communicating through a bizarre array of tubing).
- 4 Briefing occurs in a pitch-black room, where the only source of light is from the corridor outside filtering in under the briefing room door.
- 5 Briefing officer is hidden inside a bot chassis, communicating through an electronically filtered voice.
- 6 Official, schoolmaster briefing officer sitting at the head of a classroom with blackboard and chalk; tests PCs frequently.
- 7 Suspicious, twitchy briefing officer in highly defended position such as an armour briefing podium or behind sandbags.
- 8 Bureaucratic snafu assigns briefing officer to an adjacent room instead; he won't join the PCs because that would violate orders; instead he conducts briefing by shouting/passing notes through a hole in the wall/morse code.
- 9 Briefing officer is curled up and semi-catatonic on the floor; briefing delivered in mutters and crazed ramblings under his breath.
- 10 Briefing officer sits with his back to the PCs and refuses to acknowledge them; an aide passes on everything the briefing officer says.
- 11 Briefing officer left a recording device with the mission briefing on it; it's faulty and (1-5) plays at double speed, (6-10) half the briefing has been taped over with a TV show (11-15) no or altered sound (16-20) explodes.
- 12 Briefing officer is shot just after the PCs arrive and is replaced by (1-10) a different officer (11-20) his clone who is very shifty and refuses to answer questions.
- 13 Briefing officer has serious coughing fit every few words, disrupting every sentence. He gets annoyed when asked to repeat himself.
- 14 Briefing officer is incredibly patriotic and uses lots of slogans and catchphrases.
- 15 Briefing officer skims through the briefing at high speed, as he expects the PCs to know all details already, then walks out without allowing questions.
- 16 Briefing officer whispers details to team leader only.
- 17 Briefing officer is heavily armed and appears to be expecting attack at any minute.
- 18 When PCs leave the briefing, an explosion follows, leaving no sign of the briefing officer except a large burn mark.
- 19 The Computer conducts the briefing.
- 20 Briefing officer is dead on arrival and no-one comes to replace him. He may have notes on his body that describe the PCs' mission.

31. Secret Society Briefings

Somewhere after the formal briefing, make sure every Troubleshooter has a chance to check his locker, or go to the bathroom (the character, not the player), or maybe stop by a particular confession booth with a black can of CoffeeLike leaning against the jamb. Something like that.

These are Secret Society contact points. Either face-to-face or by message, the character's Secret Society gives him the lowdown behind his mission and tells him what they want done. The society's understanding is probably fuzzy but their instructions are crystal clear: Grab

this. Kill that guy (almost always another Troubleshooter). Find the box under your chair and deliver it to X.

Ideally, the missions of the Troubleshooters should cross over in some fashion – they are both after the same new gadget; Bob-R is ordered to kill the briefing officer, Phil-R is ordered to protect the briefing officer at all costs; Commie Bob-R is given a big packet of propaganda fliers and ordered to distribute them, while Sierra Clubber Phil-R's been ordered to save the Outdoors by recycling as much paper as possible. You can also just pass on possibly erroneous information about

other Troubleshooters, the mission, Alpha Complex or how Internal Security are listening to your thoughts through the bots, man, the bots are in my brain...

Conduct these briefings as private conferences with individual players. To keep the session from slowing to a halt, intersperse the conferences through the next couple of stages before the mission proper begins.

A dark room (optional)

The Troubleshooters have to get to PLC or the IR Market or somewhere. If you want,

32. OUTFITTING

Generic Traitorous Conspiracy Table.

1-2	Kill Troubleshooter X.
3-4	Protect Troubleshooter X.
5-6	Recruit Troubleshooter X.
7-8	Spread society propaganda as much as possible.
9-10	Attempt to use this society gadget/treasure/resource as much as possible.
11-12	Deliver a treasonous object to our agent.
13-14	Steal something we want.
15-16	Destroy a person, place or object that we don't like.
17-18	Sabotage something. Make your sabotage undetectable but catastrophic.
19-20	Observe and take notes on something you're not supposed to know about.

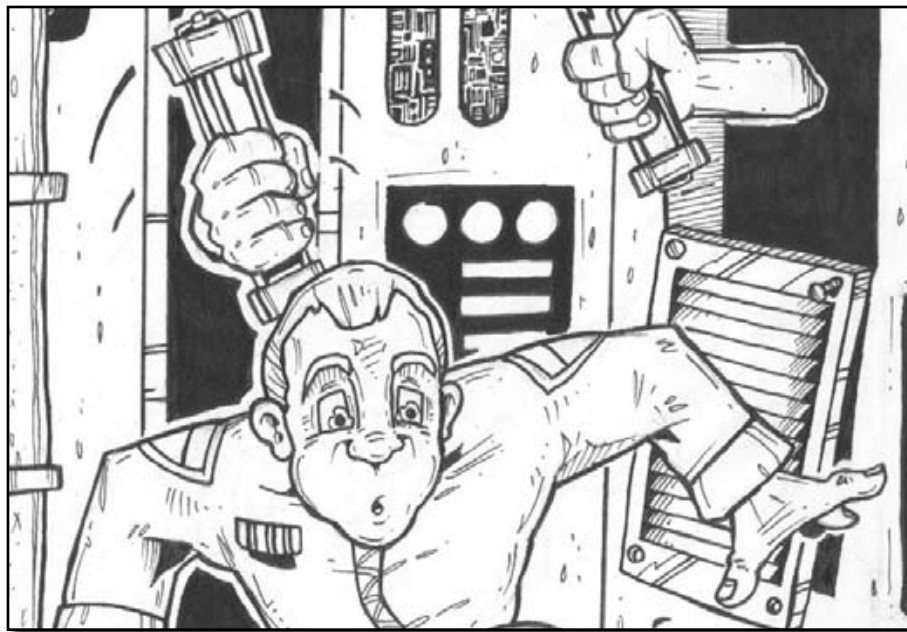
you can just summarise the transition gracefully ('a quick transtube ride takes you to the sector's main PLC distribution center') – the work of a sentence.

But if you can spare the time and especially if you are running one or more players through their first **PARANOIA** game, you must find an opportunity to put them, however briefly, together alone in a dark room.

See the situation from the perspective of many new players: You have just got this new character with a mutant power and maybe some secret equipment and your Secret Society has just given you a mission to kill one or more of your fellow Troubleshooters.

It is entirely possible you are bursting with pent-up energy. You just cannot wait to bump off that guy, if only you could get him where nobody is watching, you and him alone together in some kind of a, a – dark room.

So, Gamemaster, indulge these novices. Give them a dark room – the location hardly matters. Maybe the PCs' elevator stops in a momentary power failure.



'Stay tuned for a secret message from your secret society.'

Maybe, due to Commie sabotage, the PCs' transtube car halts in mid-tunnel. Maybe there's a waiting room at the PLC office and the lights flicker out. Doesn't matter. Just lean back and wait for the players to start passing you notes.

After they have blown each other up, activate the characters' next clones and proceed. If they don't feel murderous yet, just wait and do another dark room later on, after relationships have had time to fester.

32. Outfitting

After the briefing, the next major scene is usually outfitting. At a minimum, the team needs a few fresh laser barrels each, Reflec armour and their MBD gear, although they may already have it from a previous mission. They also need to pick up any required equipment for their new assignment. This could take the Troubleshooters to PLC, the IR Market or an auction site, or even all three. Each one screws the Troubleshooters over in a different way.

PLC

Production, Logistics & Commissary handles production and distribution of the material needs of Alpha Complex citizens. To obtain needed items – mission equipment, food, clothing, work, recreational and personal gear – a citizen presents himself at one of PLC's distribution centres, fills out a request and receives prompt and solicitous attention from ever-courteous PLC

staffers, who make the needed item available as quickly as possible.

At least, that is the theory. In practice, the clerks are surly, incompetent or demand bribes. Also, PLC may substitute other items for the requested equipment, or just dump a load of junk on the characters as 'mission-critical equipment?' You need a radiation suit? Well, we do not have any in stock but here is a set of overalls



TROUBLESHOOTERS

and some paint with a really high lead content. Sign here?

Okay. Let's suppose the Troubleshooters manage to request some equipment that is actually available and offered to them, thanks to a good Access roll, excellent bootlicking or the pity of the GM. They have to sign for the equipment, making them incredibly responsible for its safety. Losing or damaging equipment may bring fines and reprimands. Shrewd Troubleshooters always test the equipment before they sign for it. Testing automatic weapons and grenades in the PLC distribution centres is always exciting for the busy shoppers standing around.

Auctions

Alpha Complex citizens can buy and sell stuff through several auctions such as C-Bay. Any citizen can access these auctions through a simple touchscreen at any Computer terminal. By sliding your ME Card – well, someone's ME Card, anyway – through a card reader, you access the account keyed to that card. Here you can bid on stuff owned by other citizens, sell your own stuff to the highest bidder and review the current status of previous transactions. Every transaction you make automatically adjusts the credit balance on your ME Card – rather, on the *someone's* card keyed to that account. (Hope we're not being too subtle.) The account has a colour-coded

Security Clearance equal to the account holder's Clearance. You can initiate business with anyone of your account's Security Clearance or lower. Generally the higher the account's Clearance, the cooler the stuff it has for sale.

If the Troubleshooters are sent to C-Bay by their briefing officer, then they will also be given a line of credit to use. You should give the players a list of items and associated prices. Some of the items are the ones they need. Ensure that they cannot afford all of them with the credit they have been given, so they will have to make up the difference somehow. Make sure there are a few items on there that look really appealing but are nothing to do with the mission.

Watch them argue about what to buy. Watch them accuse each other of being traitors trying to sabotage the mission. If they do come up with some clever plan to get all the gear they need, then just raise the prices as the items get sniped by precognitive mutant bidders.

Oh, and as there is no reliable delivery system in Alpha Complex, there's every chance that your C-Bay orders are late/tampered with/stolen/entirely wrong. Now, who ordered *Das Kapital*?

The IR Market

If PLC won't fill the Troubleshooters' needs, they can try the illegal black

(**INFRARED**) market. In any given sector there is probably a market. Locations differ; finding the IR Market can be a running gag from mission to mission, like finding the briefing room. *Someone* knows where it is but does he trust you enough to tell you? It takes a bribe to find out and maybe a good Access roll.

The IR Market is everything that PLC is not: seedy and ill-lit, low-budget, yet well-stocked, efficient, courteous, in a way – assuming you consider aggressively friendly hard-sell salespeople 'courteous.' The IR Market is like PLC in one way: crooked. Everyone there is either in Free Enterprise or pays off Free Enterprise. Everyone there is a scammer, so chummy up to the moment he peels you away from your credits, then giving you a breathtakingly fast brushoff. The merchandise is right out there on a cheap card table. It looks great! It is insanely expensive but anybody can just grab it. Go ahead – those eight scarred guys with slugthrowers are probably just for show.

The IR Market gets the Troubleshooters the best gear at the best prices; they can actually check merchandise before they buy and they don't get given useless junk. It's perfect – it's just illegal. Going to the IR Market is worth two or three Treason Points to any Troubleshooter, if the crime is reported...

33. Service Services

'Huh? We're not going to R&D? But we always used to go to R&D to test valuable experimental equipment that blows up in our face. Aren't we gonna test valuable experimental equipment that blows up in our face any more?'

Yes, Troubleshooter, you did visit R&D on every previous mission (and congratulations on your long memory of previous editions of **PARANOIA**). You certainly will visit R&D again on future missions, from time to time. Now, though, The Computer has generously offered its Troubleshooter teams to all Service Groups, to perform important little dangerous jobs they might have lying around. The guiding principle in

these 'service services': 'As long as you're heading in that direction, why don't you take care of this too?' Most service services complicate the mission in some fashion – the Troubleshooters are running around dragging an experimental portable reactor with them, or have to maintain excessively smiles and speak in 'customer-friendly' phrases all the time ('*would you like fries with that termination, Commie?*').

Service services can include courier duties, fact-finding research, maintenance jobs and detective work, among other duties. They vary extensively among the groups. The only common factor is, someone high up had sufficient pull to shove their

service onto the Troubleshooter mission docket.

Still, the most common and well-beloved service service is the visit to R&D, where the Troubleshooters routinely get assigned exceptionally dangerous, inoperative, inappropriate or perversely intelligent equipment by inspired psychotics.

Alternatively, other delights await the team at other Service Groups.

👁 At **Armed Forces** bases, authoritarian lowbrow officers routinely order the Troubleshooters into hostile territory to throw away their clones

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for objectives considered too unimportant or dangerous to waste valuable Armed Forces personnel.

- ④ At **CPU** offices, officious and accusatory managerial supervisors routinely instruct the Troubleshooters to seek invalid, implausible or perversely treasonous information for deceitful, accusatory supervisors.
- ④ At **HPD & Mind Control** offices phony gladhanding producers routinely persuade the Troubleshooters to subject innocent citizens to entertainment and loyalty exercises of highly dubious morality and zero truth content.
- ④ At **Internal Security** bureaus corrupt, hyper-paranoid fascist officers routinely coerce the Troubleshooters into infiltrating Secret Societies to plant lethal boobytraps. Or the Troubleshooters must arrest dangerous traitors IntSec has located but mysteriously not yet apprehended.
- ④ In deafening **Power Services** stations smug know-it-all bosses routinely require the Troubleshooters to transport highly explosive, toxic, radioactive – not to mention explosive – equipment to places no sane human would dare go.
- ④ On **Technical Services** repair missions Troubleshooters routinely perform hazardous guard duty for callous techs in deadly locations.

Armed Forces

The mission of the Armed Forces is the defence of the Alpha Complex Way of Life from external threats. No known purpose can possibly be as important. None. Don't cock that eyebrow at me, mister. None.

Therefore the Armed Forces maintains a standing fighting force, honed to a lethal edge of training and armed with the most advanced weapons and gear that can reliably be counted upon to perform the same functions two or more times in a row. The proud men and women of the Armed Forces stand ready to slaughter all who fling themselves against them.

The trouble is – and no one has bothered to explained this to the Armed Forces – there are no external threats of consequence. There may indeed be Communist colonies hiding in abandoned sectors, for instance or even Outdoors. Yet their occupants mostly sit around arguing Leninist vs. Maoist doctrine, smoking clove cigarettes, setting poetry to overpercussionated music and calculating how many more days they can go without showering.

So what do the Armed Forces do? Why, they train. Endlessly. They march in formation in dedicated Formation Plazas. They go on war games, sometimes Outdoors, where they expend enough heavy ordnance ammunition to sink Zanzibar. They learn to disassemble and reassemble every item of their gear by touch while spinning around and around inside an industrial washing machine.

They are far too busy training to go on intelligence missions. Instead they hire expendable Troubleshooters.

The Armed Forces are comprised of the Ground Force (they shoot guns), the Sky Force (they shoot missiles), the Sea Force (they shoot really big guns), the Water Force (much like the Sea Force, except smaller, less prestigious, equipped with inferior boats and smaller guns and totally redundant), the Elite Insertion Force (which combines traits and materiel from the other forces and therefore steps on everyone else's toes) and the new and highly-funded Space Force, Deep-Earth Force and Time Force (all still awaiting equipment).

When preparing Armed Forces missions, remember the following:

Every member of every sub-service of the Armed Forces is 100% without a sense of humour and is extraordinarily touchy about the group's proud traditions.

Each member of each force despises all other forces; each holds Internal Security in contempt; each looks down on, but does not necessarily despise, Troubleshooters.

Each force has its own distinctive rank hierarchy, with distinctive rank markings and uniforms; each force adopts a new uniform and set of markings every so often, so it is seldom possible to recognise a soldier's rank or force.

Armed Forces never outsource anything security-related, like weapon testing or transport. Well, almost never. Well, okay, maybe some corrupt NCO is shipping stolen munitions to his Free Enterprise contacts in a distant sector and he needs convenient fall-guy flunkies to transport the hot merchandise. Or the Troubleshooters are supposed to deliver Meals Ready-to-Eat but a sleepy supply clerk mistakenly puts grenades in the boxes. Or local troopers all got wiped out in a firing range accident, so it is up to the Troubleshooters to get this crowd-control ammo to the riot-control troops in ARG Sector. On second thought, forget we said anything about Armed Forces restrictions.

'Here's a large box full of out-of-date and highly unstable explosive. The disposal facility is located next to your mission destination, so we want you to bring the box there. Make sure you do not expose the box to high temperatures, violent shocks, open flames, strong electromagnetic fields, radiation, electricity, bright lights, loud noises or strong flavours. Don't open the box.'

'Our recruiters are falling short of quota in this sector. We want you to recruit at least two citizens each to join the Armed Forces. If any of you recruit five or more citizens, we'll give you a 500-credit bonus.'

'We're going to conduct a test of Alpha Complex's readiness to resist biological attacks and we want you guys to play victims. At random times, we will alert you via your PDC – you must immediately pretend to be sick and fall over. An Armed Forces Containment Team will arrive and secure the area; once they let you out of the body bags, you can continue with your mission – until the next alert comes. Oh, you are not permitted to reveal the existence of the exercise to anyone you meet. The whole point is to determine how civilians would react to the deployment of a bioweapon.'

CPU

This Service Group's motto is, 'Teaching you to do it right'. CPU's mission in life is to improve the efficiency of every citizen. It does this by careful implementation of flow analysis, pass-through antifriction measures and ecolubrication, return



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on energy investment and many other brain-hurting buzzwords. In short, CPU is made up of efficiency experts who have discovered teaching others how to work effectively means not having to work yourself.

Typically, CPU's involvement in any situation goes like this: An operation experiences a problem. A manager or The Computer calls in CPU. CPU sends an evaluator, who studies the problem and pronounces it worse than expected. Four more CPU evaluators go in and the original evaluator becomes their supervisor. This unit describes a method by which the operation may become efficient again and hands it off to the operation to implement. But they don't leave.

The operation implements the new method. It doesn't improve things enough. The on-station CPU supervisor calls for another CPU evaluator to evaluate the improvement. The new evaluator pronounces the implementation worse than imagined. Four more evaluators go in. The new evaluator becomes their supervisor. Repeat until the problem is resolved to The Computer's satisfaction (not likely) or the project is so decrepitly over managed it can no longer survive and the withered husk dies (almost 100% likely). Then the CPU evaluators go on to new projects.

CPU seldom hires Troubleshooters for missions. Instead, CPU sometimes designates a mission *inefficient* (meaning one or more Troubleshooter teams went in and died without noticeable result), so when dispatching its next Troubleshooter team into that deathtrap, The Computer assigns them a CPU 'Yellowpants' evaluator. If they cannot convince the evaluator of their spectacular efficiency (they cannot, unless they are spectacularly efficient at killing him), then halfway through the mission he redesigns the Troubleshooters' operating procedures. Now the Troubleshooters must conform to a new set of procedures (which tends to be fatal); if they cannot convince The Computer their next, inevitable failure is 100% the fault of CPU, those procedures become standard for all Troubleshooters, everywhere, until new CPU evaluators determine they are... inefficient.

CPU agents accompany, watch and comment (often recording narratives of the Troubleshooters' inadequacies in their presence) but never participate – they certainly would not lift a finger to save a life. They are also fond of offering up little nuggets of wisdom or motivation:

'Bottlenecks are never eliminated. When we widen them, the one that has not been widened quite as much becomes the new bottleneck. Do you need to be widened, citizen?'

'That was almost not inadequate. You're improving.'

'I must always strive to be better than you. You must always strive to be better than the pathetic failure next to you.'

CPU service services are usually attempts to 'improve' or 'streamline' operations, in the same way a fast-moving brick 'improves' or 'streamlines' your skull.

'Bringing subordinates into the decision-making process may be our best idea since Smile Hard Day! Whenever your team faces critical decisions during your mission, hold a conference. You will not advance further until there's a unanimous vote on the course of action you'll pursue. Report results to us.'

'We're currently considering some changes to our forms, such as merging the Voluntary Termination and Accusation of Treason forms, introducing the Oxygen Intake Report Form and removing the need for Equipment Request Forms by placing registered telepaths in PLC offices. Here's a stack of sample forms. Let us know just how efficiently your team functions when using them.'

'Under the new Form Buddy Initiative, we want you to designate an Official Form Filler Administration Liaison for your team. The OFFAL will be responsible for filling in all forms. He'll write in the details, you just attach your tongue print and the form will then be processed. By having one person deal with all the paperwork, we estimate an Efficiency Gain of 0.72%! So, who do you trust...to have the best penmanship?'

HPD&MC

In some of the melodramas produced by HPD&MC, evil villains have big tanks of acid into which they attempt to lower

bound, heroic citizens. This is an apt metaphor. Think of HPD&MC as a big acid tank into which Troubleshooters throw requests for information, only to watch those requests bubble away into nothing.

Troubleshooters often seek information held in this group's great repository of population data. Each separate type of question requires the filing of a different form, as do revisions made to forms, changing ink colour, crossing the lunchtime Reorganisation Barrier or violating a service use-of-prepositions guideline.

HPD&MC has an additional specific task that pertains to Troubleshooters: clearing **RFA**s. An RFA is a Request For Action, which may be filed by any sufficiently desperate citizen who does not know who else to ask for help. HPD&MC handles most RFAs internally, by misfiling them until such a time as all concerned parties are dead but occasionally a more enduring RFA surfaces requiring direct investigation. Then a bureaucrat puts in a service service request to The Computer, asking for the next bunch of Troubleshooters heading that way.

Typically Troubleshooters enter the bustling, high-traffic HPD&MC offices, a perky receptionist conducts them to a water fountain or janitor's closet, *graaa* gradually understands this is not what they are here for, takes them to a conference room and abandons them for all eternity. Once they wander out again and become dangerous or abusive, someone who knows why they were called finally arrives.

The HPD&MC rep hands them an RFA. He wants results PDQ but in the inevitable Q&A it becomes evident the situation is a SNAFU. He has no information other than that printed on the RFA. For instance:

'I have forgotten my name and where I live. Please help. I'm now living in the basement of the foam-cheese factory. Signed, somebody.'

'Your show *That's Flatulence!* makes me want to kill myself. Is this what you intended?' (Usually the answer is 'yes' but on the rare contrary occasions, investigators are sent.)

'Angry people have moved into my quarters and thrown me out. Why?'

'I have proof there are subversive

33. SERVICE SERVICES

messages buried in recent broadcasts of *Cafeteria Cookoff*!

When asked for further information, the HPD&MC rep gives all Troubleshooters a bewildering variety of cryptic forms to fill in and submit. This means much lost time. He also provides them with a box of unrelated items he insists will help them in their search. (In actuality this is a box from the massive HPD&MC Lost & Found warehouse. Years back, service planners hit on an idea to ease crowding in that warehouse by tricking every visitor to the offices into taking away one box.) The contents can be anything from used bubble-gum collections to the very item the Troubleshooters need to complete their mission.

HPC&MC service services are often surveys or other bureaucratic sinkholes. Others are assigned by the Mind Control section – Troubleshooters are the Heroes of Alpha Complex, so stick a few cameras on them and you have got a highly-rated TV show...

'Certain sectors aren't yet using their workspace with maximal efficiency. Here, have this pack of inflatable barriers. Whenever you come across a room of over 400 square metres, divide it into 3x3 metre cubicles.'

'Communications & Recording Officer! We're now promoting you to Field Producer for the next episode of *Troubleshooter Live!* We'll be feeding your multicorder straight onto the televisions of Alpha Complex. Make sure you keep up a running commentary. Loyalty Officer, you're the Executive Producer – make sure you execute anyone who sabotages the show! Have this censor control – press the sound button to bleep out any Commie propaganda or classified information and press the vision button to blur the camera if you're in a sensitive location. Other than that... have fun! And don't worry, we'll let you know when to stop for an ad break – if you could arrange for a cliff-hanger ending before each break, that'll keep our ratings high!'

'Morale is alarmingly low in this sector. We need your team to cheer people up. Make everyone you meet feel valued and important! Give even the lowliest scrubot a pep talk and make sure you

tell him just how great a job he's doing scrubbing the floor!'

Internal Security

Internal Security has no motto. Mottos are not secure. If there were one, it might be 'Rest easy, knowing we're here to keep you in line.'

IntSec exists to protect the citizens of Alpha Complex from internal threats: traitors, saboteurs, terrorists, rabble-rousers and people who think naughty thoughts. To protect citizens, IntSec must know what every one of them is thinking at all times. It infiltrates every organisation it can find, planting bugs everywhere, monitoring transmissions and so on.

IntSec operates under laws laid down by The Computer to keep it from being an autonomous entity. (For instance, it must not cause any citizens to disappear without explaining why to The Computer.) To disobey those laws is to commit treason. Yet effective operation requires IntSec to operate outside those laws. (For instance, reporting the disappearance of a traitor to The Computer might persuade The Computer to initiate an investigation, alerting the traitor's equally traitorous friends something is up.) Yes, even The Computer must be protected from itself. In the interest of – how to put it – *expediency*, IntSec contracts some of its sensitive operations to Troubleshooters, who, when things go bad, can be conveniently blamed and eliminated.

Meetings with IntSec personnel sometimes take place at IntSec offices. (These always turn out to be non-IntSec facilities hastily dressed up to appear to belong to IntSec. They disappear immediately after use.) Usually they take place in clandestine sites: in a mess hall or with all the Troubleshooters and one IntSec operative packed into a communications booth or in adjacent rear seats in a vidshow lounge.

At these meetings the officer gives the Troubleshooters a self-destructing file with their objectives and descriptions of all persons likely to be involved. This file usually self-destructs before the PCs can memorise the crucial information. Goals

for these missions can include infiltrating and acting as an agent provocateur for a traitorous organisation, infiltrating a seemingly-innocent organisation and demonstrating it is traitorous, proving a genius scientist is being a genius more slowly than he absolutely has to be (and therefore must be a traitor), field-testing mind-reading devices, identifying paid killers and neutralising them, contriving preposterous scenarios in which people are isolated and convinced impossible events have taken place so they confess to personal treason and so on.

IntSec usually provides the Troubleshooters with devices to help them accomplish these goals: eavesdropping gear, poison capsules, X-ray eyeglasses, latex masks that allow perfect simulation of real people (but sometimes don't want to come off), climbing shoes with velcro soles. The operating instructions for all this gear self-destruct early in the mission.

Over time, Troubleshooters learn the only way to perform a successful mission for IntSec is for them first to figure out what conclusion IntSec has already come to and then ruthlessly suppress all evidence contrary to that conclusion. They must also cultivate and maintain a scapegoat, for they will be IntSec's scapegoat if anything goes wrong and to survive must in turn have their own patsy.

IntSec outsources anything that they do not want to be caught doing: 'At your destination sector you are likely to encounter a suspicious-looking **BLUE** Clearance Armed Forces officer. If you see him, covertly plant these bugs on his person and in his office. If you do not see him, we suggest you keep your lasers charged.'

'Replace all beverage cans in the indicated vendobot with these cans. Don't ask why. Don't drink from any of these cans.'

'You are to perform loyalty tests on any citizens you encounter. Each of you will be issued with several pages of traitorous propaganda. Do not read this traitorous propaganda! Your mission is to covertly offer this propaganda to citizens, to test their resolve. Report any citizens who accept propaganda.'



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PLC

In primitive Old Reckoning times company managers discovered one of the secrets of financial success involved the firm keeping more than it gave away. PLC leaders have embraced this philosophy. Though PLC is obliged to provide material goods to citizens, it has discovered that doing so in a pleasing, efficient manner only encourages people to ask for more. Thus PLC has adopted a tradition it refers to as 'barrier-oriented customer service.' The Service Group makes it as tedious and inconvenient as possible for citizens to acquire the goods they want.

This philosophy extends to PLC's relationship with Troubleshooters. Characters assigned a PLC service service still have to visit the vast PLC warehouse facilities. They still have to get in line and slowly work their way up to a clerk behind a sheet of armoured glass. All this just to ask to see a supervisor.

Eventually conducted into a section of warehouse beside endless streams of fast-rolling forklifts, menaced by 16-ton crates hauled hither and yon by the Giant Steel Winches of the Gods, their ears assailed by the sounds of backing-up alarms and crates tumbling off tall, mountainous stacks of durable goods, they at last speak with a supervisor, who gives them details of their mission.

Invariably, it is a mission of retrieval. Someone, somewhere, because of a filing clerk's error, received something he should not have – anything from a lead pipe to 144 Teela-O Bobblehead dolls to 16 tons of sweaty dynamite plus a crate of self-propelled, voice-activated cigarette lighters with the enamelled motto 'Fire Is Our Servant!'

The service rep disinterestedly describes the mis-assigned item, explain where it went and who received it, and demand its return. People who have erroneously received important goods from PLC have often hidden or sold them by the time the Troubleshooters show up, if not within the first 13 seconds of receipt. Whoever has them now probably does not want to return them. *Especially* the Teela-O Bobbleheads.

However, this is the new Alpha Complex. The Computer might instead send the Troubleshooters to the new, improved, privatised PLC distribution group, Alpha-Mart, where they simply take a shopping cart, trundle down the aisles, load up on all the equipment they need, then go through checkout, swiping their MECards for payment. So much more efficient and pleasant than the old way – except they have to stick to the appropriate colour-coded aisles. Somehow there does not seem to be any way to get to the HE cone rifle shells they need except by crossing a **BLUE** Clearance aisle, which would, of course, be treason.

Or they get lost in the maze-like FunFoods area, and though amazing numbers of experimental new flavors are available, even a case pack of Cold Fun isn't a terribly effective weapon.

Or all the appropriate-colour laser barrels are on sale at a deep discount and therefore sold out. The management cheerily offers a rain check to let them purchase the barrels on another visit at the low, low sale price but they cannot actually say when the barrels will be back in stock, because there has been quite a run on them lately....

'Citizen Jerome-R-DFG has not reported for duty in Warehouse 9 for three days. While you are out there, see if you can find him for us.' (An errant forkliftbot blocked him into a seldom used corner with a stack of crates and no one has heard him yell for help.)

'We're running a Consumer Preference Test for the new flavour of Bouncy Bubble Beverage, R&D Experimental Flavour #72. Using Troubleshooters increases the publicity value. Take this case of B3 with you to hand out and make certain every customer fills out this Taste Response Survey.'

'Power Services has requested a case of Argon-Synth Radiographs. Get them from Warehouse 17 and deliver them to Power Station 9. Do not forget to get a receipt.' (Warehouse 17 does not have any but Warehouse 18 does... and it's Power Station 8 that wants them.)

Power Services

This group's slogan is 'Power is Power.' (The group's current **VIOLET** senior

administrator earned his position by proving mathematically his assertion that 'All A = A.'). Power Services exists to provide power – electrical energy, fuel energy, radioactivity and so on – to anyone who needs it – and is approved by The Computer for its use, of course.

Troubleshooters called in to perform a Power Services service service normally visit one of the many sources of Alpha Complex's power: almost always a nuclear fission or fusion plant, less often a volcano with lava-based steam generators howling with the energy they provide to all good citizens. Power Services also maintains a couple of underground hydroelectric dams, which sounds unlikely and basically is.

Why are the meetings held in these places? So strutting Power Services engineers can show off their mighty industrial works, which people otherwise never visit. In these places smartly jumpsuited workers eagerly, even anxiously demonstrate their helpfulness and zeal to the Troubleshooters, while fearfully keeping an eye on their bosses in case their enthusiasm should be deemed wanting.

Power is dangerous and (as Power Services knows) Troubleshooters live for danger; ergo, Power Services calls in Troubleshooters to deal with every single power source problem they experience. For instance:

'Just take charge of this li'l old tanker truckbot convoy here and make sure it gets to the new sector plant by oh-six-hunnerd. Yessir, each one of these babies carries enough high-pressure, supercooled natural gas to loft 16 residential blocks into low Earth orbit but it's all safe as yer barracks. Just make sure *this* tempacher gauge don't go up into the red range, *this* pressure gauge don't drop none and yer speed stays constant to within one percent.'

'Dam's about to break. Cain't have that. Go down there and patch it up where it's crumbling. See, where the little tiny jets of water are starting to come out.'

'Sensors aren't enough. We want this real, specially outfitted jackobot down in the depths of Mount Spasm to tell us when it's going to blow. I outfitted this sweet little thing myself. You fellas just conduct my sweetie down and stay with her 'til she's sure.'

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'The plant really needs these rods. O'course, so does PURGE or one 'a them traitors. You keep an eye out for them, hear?'

Power Services provides the Troubleshooters with state-of-the-art vehicles and equipment to get their job done. These items are comparatively reliable. They are never sufficient to cope with the problems Troubleshooters experience on these missions. Why? Because since the beginning of the service services duty program, Power Services has been able to blame Troubleshooters for almost every power interruption in Alpha Complex.

'Take this really, really long cable. Plug one end into this socket, and the other end into the socket at the specified destination. We're pretty sure it's thick and sturdy enough not to be torn apart. It is long enough, we think. It might be too short by a centimetre or so. We're sure you'll come up with a viable solution.'

'Tech Services replaced all the light bulbs in this sector with extremely inefficient UltraBrites. Here's a crate of LiteBrites, they draw less than one-tenth the power of the existing bulbs.'

'We need you to clear out a slime mould infestation in the wiring ducts. Every few metres along the corridor, there's an access hatch in the ceiling. One of the team needs to climb up there and spray this Mould-B-Gone into all the crevices. Make sure you get down before there's a power surge, or you'll be fried.'

R&D

'Better Living through Science' is the motto of Research & Design. The cheerful, over stimulated and under-supervised technicians and geniuses of R&D labour long hours to produce the scientific and technological innovations that will catapult Alpha Complex into a future of unimagined luxury, productivity and freedom from care (or, more likely, into a showy display of fireworks in the lower atmosphere).

These overgrown kids play with all the potent resources of superscience – that amalgam of semi-plausible, semi-stupid,

semi-scientific ideas that are the heritage of pulp SF novels, superhero mutant-power comic books and trashy SF films. In such literary traditions, everything – personal shields, glove warmers, toothbrushes – is powered by miniature nuclear reactors. Antigravity is just a matter of getting atoms to spin upside down, or inside out, or something like that. And ray guns. And plasma bottles. And fusion cannons. And X-ray lasers the size of ballpoint pens.

Of course, the introduction of such incredible technology would produce fundamental changes in any society, changes we are too lazy to imagine and account for. So this super technology is not available to most citizens in Alpha Complex. It is only in the experimental stages.

The Computer often arranges the assignment of experimental technology to Troubleshooters for two reasons: (1) The Computer believes it will be particularly useful in a given mission, despite its untested status; (2) The R&D boys are always eager to get their equipment field-tested – ideally, someplace far away from R&D where only innocent citizens will be hurt.

Experienced Troubleshooters know R&D devices are exceptionally dangerous. However, The Computer may view refusal to accept assignment of an experimental device as insubordinate doubt of The Computer's wisdom and generosity. 'Citizen, please accept the unparalleled honour of testing the Mark 9 Portable Nova Cannon. We would normally issue appropriate protective gear at this time but the designers assure me the weapon is perfectly safe. Perfectly. I'm sure we can count on your cooperation.'

Collect ideas for R&D devices from science magazine articles, science fiction novels or superhero comics, then warp them to your perversely destructive purposes. Vary your methods of assigning these devices from mission to mission. R&D staffers come and go (often in small plastic bags) and R&D firms often undergo extensive alterations as a result of unanticipated test results, so Troubleshooters seldom visit the same lab twice.

In some cases, designers and techs demonstrate their devices for the Troubleshooters, eagerly answer questions and reassure them the devices are completely safe, then let the Troubleshooters pick the devices they would like to have assigned to them. Sometimes officious clerks assign the devices arbitrarily and the techs and designers are unavailable for questioning. Sometimes the scientists politely ask the Troubleshooters to describe the sort of device they would like, then assign them devices at random. Sometimes the briefing officers give troublesome or uncooperative Troubleshooters the most dangerous, most unreliable devices, while giving faithful bootlickers the nifty weapons that actually work.

Classic R&D field testing assignments include:

'Here's a selection box of new grenades. Try them out. Take notes on which ones work.'

'Having trouble chasing down fast-moving Communists in the corridors? Two word for you, Troubleshooters – rocket boots!'

'This is the FunBot. It will follow you around, cracking jokes and lightening the mood to lift morale. You'll love it – it's hi-larious! Do not attempt to kill the FunBot. Do not attempt to lose the FunBot. Do not shoot the FunBot. Do not allow the FunBot to fire cream pies at high Clearance citizens. You are responsible for the FunBot's actions. Do not tamper with the FunBot. Do not stuff the FunBot into a disposal chute. Do not melt, free or irradiate the FunBot. You are responsible for any and all damage sustained by the FunBot in the course of your mission.'

Besides the usual field-testing of experimental equipment, Troubleshooters can risk their lives for R&D in other ways:

'Take these sealed, unmarked crates containing discontinued projects to Warehouse 5, right next to your destination. Do not, under any circumstances, open them, destroy them, ask about their contents, stare at them too long or mention the word 'phlegm' anywhere near them.'



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'Escort one of our former workers, who recently suffered a little, uh, accident, to a retirement gulag in your destination sector. Keep him under surveillance and away from sharp objects. However, note he is of **GREEN** Clearance and therefore must be obeyed. If he happens to spill classified information, report immediately for brainscrubbing.'

Tech Services

Finger-pointers can implicate you, PLC can give you food poisoning or saddle you with a singing and dancing snowglobe as your sole source of entertainment but Tech Services can be even more terrifying. They can choose not to fix your door, your PDC or your toilet. For years. Until you die, or at least want to.

Known for their grimy coveralls and their 'how dare you ask me to do you a favour?' stares, the crews over at Tech Services occasionally require Troubleshooters. For instance, they may need to repair communications conduits sabotaged by traitors (traitors who lurk, with weapons and big shiny sharp teeth, in the shadowy depths where the communications conduits are strung), fix a malfunctioning autocannon emplacement or perform repairs on a high-speed transtube car that just cannot stop. In all these cases, a Troubleshooter team's Tech Services service usually consists of escorting a technician someplace dangerous, then dying one by one around him while he nonchalantly fixes machinery and adjusts his belt across his butt-crack.

A Tech Services duty starts with a reminder from The Computer that the service is extremely important. Failure is not an option. Tech Services personnel must be protected at all costs until the mission is successful.

Then it's time for a visit to one of Tech Service's loading docks, where a surly technician says, 'Everyone up to speed? Let's go.' Upon being informed nobody is up to speed, this long-suffering protector of Alpha Complex's smooth-running operations complains that Troubleshooters should arrive pre-briefed, then offers a 10-word explanation of the problem. Only constant badgering elicits the full story. He's not trying to conceal information from them, he just knows their only role in this mission is to die so he can get the job done – they do not need to know anything except 'Stand between me and those weird-looking flashes of light.'

If the Troubleshooters demand full disclosure, vehicles or gear that might conceivably keep them alive, or repairs to equipment, the tech usually throws a temper tantrum appropriate to an operatic diva, followed by quick complaints to The Computer or, just possibly, grudging compliance with the demands.

In the course of the mission, the technician regales the Troubleshooters with stories of other Troubleshooters he has known and how they died horribly keeping him alive. Sometimes the deaths point less to traitorous action than to the tech's singular lack of attention to detail: 'So he says to me, how do you tell

if it's carrying current and I say to him, well, you stick your tongue to it. See, any tech who's been in the business more than five minutes knows that's a joke. But these stupid Troubleshooters don't, so I just watch him lap his whole tongue over that metal plate and two minutes later I'm not *just* staring at the deadest guy ever but also I'm thinking breakfast thoughts about Hot Fun. Anyways...'

Tech Services technicians never thank a Troubleshooter for saving their lives, even if it requires the Troubleshooter to cut off his own leg and beat mutants to death with it. The techs also never remember a specific Troubleshooter on a subsequent mission. Hey, why bother? They're just there to die.

- ☞ 'We need you to refill all the vending machines in the corridor with a new flavour of Algae Chips. Apparently, the old Kelp flavour was much too addictive; there were gangs of INFRAREDs smashing the vending machines to get at chips when they couldn't afford 'em. Make sure no-one steals the old chip packets after you remove them.'
- ☞ 'Those bastards over at Power Services replaced all the bulbs in the corridor with very dim LiteBrites. They're much too dark. Replace them all with these UltraBrites which will provide an acceptable level of illumination. Don't let any of those Power Services thugs stop you.'
- ☞ 'The AI subroutine in the security checkpoints may have been compromised by hackers. We need you to find a way to test the AI to see if it's letting treasonous equipment through the x-ray scanners.'

34. ENDING THE MISSION

34. Ending the Mission

Ideally, the mission should end when the Troubleshooters achieve their mission objectives. Because this is often when hell freezes over, sessions might run a little long. So here are a few ways to bring the mission to a halt when you and your players have had all the fun you can stand.

1. The terrible accident: Suddenly something blows up. Anything (In **PARANOIA**, even shoe polish can be a high explosive). The explosion tragically annihilates the mission team. The Computer postpones the mission until its Internal Security investigators determine the cause of the terrible accident. Time to gather up the character sheets.

2. Deus ex machina: That is a reference to a neat ancient Greek dramatic trick of lowering a guy dressed up like a god onto the stage to neatly clean up any loose ends the playwright was too lazy to resolve through professional plotting or characterisation. Here you just drop in some super competent high-level elite Troubleshooter hotshots, or a regiment of Vulture Commandos, or a crack unit of registered mutant heroes, or a team of R&D wizards armed with superscience marvels. They shoulder the PCs aside; casually achieve the mission objectives with a snap of their fingers, then turn and march haughtily back past the PCs, scornfully suggesting they might at least sweep up, if they cannot do anything more useful. Mission accomplished. Time to clean up the munchies.

3. Time's Up: The Briefing Officer, under pressure to deliver results immediately, declares the mission a partial success and drags the Troubleshooters back for debriefing. Anyone who contradicts the official narrative of how they succeeded despite strong Commie resistance gets terminated. Let's all just walk away and never speak of this again.

4. Drop a few hints: The Computer or one of its more competent servants speaks over the com unit. In a patient and deliberate voice it calmly explains how to complete the mission. The PCs follow the advice (or else) and everything falls right into place; zip-zip-zip – the mission is over. Time to decide who is giving whom a ride home.

5. The mission objectives wander out in front of the PCs, turn belly-up and surrender: Villains, conspirators and traitors trot up to the PCs with their hands in the air – 'Please, no more! Your relentless pursuit has crushed our restive spirits! We cast ourselves on your tender mercies!' Informants crawl out of inspection panels, eager to divulge all their secrets and dispel all mysteries. 'Good work, men.' Time to carry out the trash and put away the rulebook.

6. Just kidding: The Computer or the Troubleshooters' superiors call up and say, 'Okay. We were just testing you. This mission has been a drill. You're all dismissed. Good work. Go home now. Really.'

7. You must be mistaken, citizen: Suddenly, no one knows anything about any mission. Anyone the Troubleshooters ask has never heard of the mission, the objectives, the people involved or even the sector where it was supposed to take place. The Computer claims no mission alert was ever issued (It was all a terrible mistake and the responsible people are covering their tracks). Everyone is promoted one Security Clearance level for no apparent reason. Troubleshooters who inquire too closely are obviously traitors trying to make trouble and are executed. Troubleshooters who ask for new orders are told to go home and take a nap.

Of course, it is conceivable that the players manage to actually complete their mission, or work out what is going on so they can blackmail or terminate the real traitor behind it all, in which case, give them a round of applause and vow to get them next time.

A lot of classic **PARANOIA** missions end with a 'hose-job', where the Troubleshooters complete the mission, then get screwed over for some other reason. Us Famous Game Designers recommend avoiding inescapable hose-jobs. You want the players to believe that if they screw everyone else over and dodge all the death-traps, if they are clever and lucky and treacherous and really, really paranoid, then they can win. You have got to keep that little spark of hope alive. Ensure there is a light at the end of the tunnel – it means the players will charge into that dark tunnel even though it's full of landmines.

35. Debriefings

So the Troubleshooters have finally completed the mission, or botched it beyond any hope of success, or you are tired and want to break things up. Okay; The Computer or other authority figure summons the Troubleshooters (sometimes through force) to a mandatory debriefing. Here they report to the mission authorities (usually the briefing officer and any other interested parties) and The Computer. The stated aim of this is to review the mission's progress and identify problems that can be avoided in future, as well as weeding

out traitors. In practice, this is when the knives come out.

Welcome to the Confession Booth

First each Troubleshooter reports individually, often in a confession booth with a lie detector. You conduct these sessions privately with each player. However, this can slow down the game just when players may be tired or

impatient to leave, so you can skip this step if you want.

Confession booths involve one-on-one time with The Computer. The Troubleshooter sits in an uncomfortable chair, wired into all sorts of galvanic skin response probes, brainwave monitors, anal constriction callipers, eye twitch assessors and other intrusive gadgets and gets to address The Computer directly. At this point, Troubleshooters can accuse their team-mates of treachery and



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subversion. The Computer will of course take all accusations seriously, although it will question why the Troubleshooter failed to stop the treason when it was taking place.

Termination by Committee

After or instead of individual debriefings, the authorities gather the entire team in the debriefing room. The team leader (usually) delivers his mission report, consisting of a brief summary of the mission objectives and his assessment of whether they achieved those objectives.

Next, the Communications & Recording's Officer's multicorder evidence is reviewed as necessary, along with the contents of the Loyalty Officer's notebook. Other team members may offer corroborating or undermining testimony. Maybe there is a fire fight. Actually, *often* there is a fire fight.

Mission authorities order survivors to drag out the bodies and then review the Troubleshooters' reports. If they are not satisfied, they cross-examine the Troubleshooters, call other witnesses, review multicorder and PDC records of the mission and turn stubborn subjects over to Internal Security interrogators, who then practice their solemn art.

Debriefing and Disintegration

Treason Points work slightly differently in the debriefing – a character can go over 20 Treason Points without being immediately terminated. Just let everyone's Treason build up until the debriefing officer is satisfied that all mission records and reports have been reviewed.

Now, offer each player the opportunity to call in favours and throw themselves on the briefing officer's mercy. Reduce the Treason Point total of anyone who takes this chance by their current Access rating.

Optionally, permanently reduce the character's Access by an equal amount, as his former allies and contacts flee from him. If the character was saved from termination by his Access, then definitely reduce his Access permanently.

Next, cross-reference the character's remaining Treason Point total with the correct punishment on the Correction table.

Correction Table

Commendation Point Total	Reward
5 or more	Computer's Pet Award
1-4	Commendation

Treason Point Total	Correction
0	No effect
1-4	Official Reprimand or Fine of 10-100 credits
5-8	Probation or Fine of 100-200 credits
9-10	Censure or Fine of 200-500 credits
11-13	Strong Censure or Fine of 500+ credits
14-16	Medication
17-19	Brainscrub or Retirement
20-29	Termination & Repatterning
30 or more	Erasure

Computer's Pet Award

There are two possibilities here – either the Troubleshooter is such a paragon of heroism and good thought that he does not have a treasonous thought in his head (statistically impossible) or else he is actually a traitor who is *really good* at hiding his treachery. Roll 1d20 – on a 1-10, then The Computer accepts this result at face value and showers the heroic Troubleshooter with rewards. Hero of Our Complex is a given, as is promotion by another one or two Clearance levels but the Troubleshooter might also be given credit bonuses, a fresh six-pack of clones, appearances on popular talk shows, a personal bot servant, sponsorship from a Service

Group and other wonderful things. He will *certainly* be given only the best, most heroic missions from now on.

On an 11+, then Internal Security steps in. Replace all the Commendation Points with Treason Points. For example, a character with 15 Commendation Points (-15 Treason) now has a Treason score of 15. Check the total again and this character has earned Medication. Send him off for some nice sedatives, and maybe he will be heroic within acceptable limits next time. You cannot be too careful.

Either way, the character is reset to 1 Treason Point and no Commendations after debriefing.

Commendation

The ideal result! The Troubleshooter is rewarded with one of the following:

- ☞ Credit bonuses of 100-1,000 credits
- ☞ The Hero of Our Complex (HOOC) award
- ☞ Better drugs
- ☞ Better quarters or equipment
- ☞ The warm fuzzy glow of knowing you did a good job. Please note that if you experience a warm fuzzy glow in other situations, you may also be absorbing an excessive amount of hard radiation and should contact Power Services immediately.

Reset the character to 1 Treason Point and no Commendations after debriefing.

Official Reprimand

The Computer issues the equivalent of an Official Commendation for minor misconduct. Generally it also assigns another minor punishment, such as marching up and down, polishing the High Programmer's Delta 88 AutoYacht, scrubbing bathrooms and so on. 'Inexcusable, citizen. You knew that residence block was inhabited. I am entering an Official Reprimand on your permanent record. I warn you, I will assign you to three days of meals in the **INFRARED** mess hall if I catch you testing X-ray lasers in public corridors again.'

Leave the Troubleshooter's Treason score unchanged.

Probation

The Troubleshooter has committed some minor infraction, normally punishable with a fine or a stern talking to by the debriefing officer. Kneel before the wagging finger of guilt, citizen!

Alternatively, Internal Security forces rules violators to volunteer to test R&D's many proposed **Malfeasance Control Devices** ('McDs'). The McD accompanies the character everywhere. The McD probation lasts until the R&D officials retrieve their device. If the McD meets a sad end beforehand, the probationary citizen is liable for its replacement cost, which is typically exorbitant. Some sample McDs to inspire your creativity:

- ☉ **Reminder Friend:** A stern little bot that points out opportunities to commit treason and cautions against them.
- ☉ **Corrective Aerosol Device:** A metal collar with voice-recognition circuitry. When it hears treasonous words, it sprays a puff of tear gas. Some models also constrict.
- ☉ **Happiness Calipers:** Just insert one hook into the left side of your mouth; put the other hook into the right side and your debriefing officer will turn the crank until your smile is of the approved size.
- ☉ **Politeness Siren:** An ankle bracelet with built-in vid camera. If it detects background colours above the wearer's Security Clearance, it sounds a sharp alarm. Being put on Probation reduces the Troubleshooter's Treason Point total by 3.

Censure

To dramatise the way insubordination truly pits the erring citizen against *all his fellow citizens* – yes indeed! – HPD&MC coordinates unified public displays of scorn or corrective finger-wagging. A letter code on the censured citizen's chest designates his offense and all other citizens who meet him are required to consult their current Censural Behaviour Schedule and shun, lecture, sneer at or kick the censuree as specified.

The problem is that many citizens disloyally fail to keep their Behaviour Schedules updated, possibly because the Schedule can be dramatically revised up to five times daily. The upshot is that any

citizen may greet the censuree with any strange reaction you wish.

Mark-R: Friend Computer, my six weeks of Censure are up. Can I have this 'Compulsively Untidy' tattoo removed from my forehead, please?

The Computer: Citizen, I have monitored your progress. You have taken to heart the lectures and lessons given you by your fellow civic-minded citizens and performed your mandatory tasks of penance. Your Tidiness Quotient is exemplary. Of course you may have your tattoo removed –

Mark-R: Thank you, Friend Computer!

The Computer: – when The Computer's loyal servants in R&D have researched and tested the required tattoo removal technology.

Mark-R: Err – are you saying you *can't* remove this Censure tattoo?

The Computer: That is incorrect. We will indeed remove your tattoo. Just not yet.

Mark-R: Ah. Might I ask, Friend Computer, when the technology will be tested and ready for use?

The Computer: Certainly you may, citizen. What is your Security Clearance?

If that punishment is not enough, The Computer can – regretfully – apply stronger forms of Censure.

Public Hatings: Like Censure but with TV coverage. The Computer considers the best use of certain offenders is to make them a public example. Creepy stone-faced bureaucrats in HPD's Rectitude Bureau publicise the citizen's offense on public vidscreens, com units and loudspeakers. They encourage other citizens to gently chide the miscreant for his carelessness.

'This citizen carelessly allowed his jumpsuit to become soiled. Shame! Encourage this thoughtless citizen to express a more diligent commitment to personal hygiene. Thank you for your cooperation.'

The Computer may instead put the offender on probation, holding this punishment in reserve against further errors in judgment.

(HPD&MC restricts the term 'Public Hating' to internal use only. Among

ordinary citizens HPD officials use the gentler term 'Community Standards Exercise').

Demotion: While high Clearance citizens can demote lower Clearance citizens in the field, most demotions and promotions happen at the end of the mission. A demoted citizen must immediately turn in any uniforms, equipment or information that he is no longer cleared for. MemGo tablets are provided to wipe high Clearance memories.

Instead of actual demotion, The Computer or the citizen may strip the victim of certain privileges, such as a Mandatory Bonus Duty assignment (see Chapter 6).

For exceptional incompetence or insubordination, a citizen could conceivably be demoted to **INFRARED** level, right out of the Troubleshooting business and back to the food vats or waste recycling. Practically speaking, this requires the player to generate a new character on the spot, so do not demote him that far unless you are willing to stop the game while he fills out the new sheet.

Being Censured reduces the Troubleshooter's Treason Point total by 5.

Medication

'Huh? What? I did something wrong? M'head hurts. Ooh, colours. Hey buddy, you are glowing the wrong colour for your Clearance. I gotta shoot you, okay?'

Medicating an offender is standard treatment if the team is on a mission and the convicted Troubleshooter cannot be readily replaced by a clone or other Troubleshooter. HPD&MC Happiness Office bureaucrats (think of the meanest registered nurses you have ever seen) prescribe and supervise biochemical supplements. If the citizen survives the supplements and the mission, The Computer may assign additional correction during debriefing.

Medication may also be applied after debriefing, to correct some ongoing problem identified by the debriefing officer.



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Have the medicated Troubleshooter's player roleplay a drug effect you think would be interesting. For guidance, roll 1d20 on this table or choose an entry:

1-2: Dazed confusion

3-4: Hyperactivity

5-6: Colour blindness

7-8: Hallucinations

9-10: Obsessive-compulsive disorder

11-12: Euphoric optimism

13-14: Open-hearted trust and sincerity

15-16: Wild confidence

17-18: Rampant homicidal psychotic paranoia

19-20: Roll twice more and combine the effects

Medication reduces the character's Treason Point total by 7.

Brainscrub

In its benign form, brainscrub is a simple HPD&MC training program in Corrective Loyalty. It clears the offender's criminal record and usually his recent memory. The former offender may barely recall Secret Society meeting points and

recognition signals, as well as the nature of his mutant power. Yet his rivalries with other Troubleshooters go down the memory hole.

That is the *best* case. IntSec escorts obnoxious or persistent offenders to the nearest Bright Vision Re-Education Centre. There, specially programmed docbots treat the offender's forebrain to a relaxing hour-long bath in a variety of neurotransmitters. The former criminal emerges fresh, optimistic and full of inspiring loyalty to The Computer. Instances of delusional or hallucinatory behaviour, including so-called imaginary playmates, are believed to be rare.

Brainscrubbing reduces the Troubleshooter's Treason Point total by 10.

Retirement

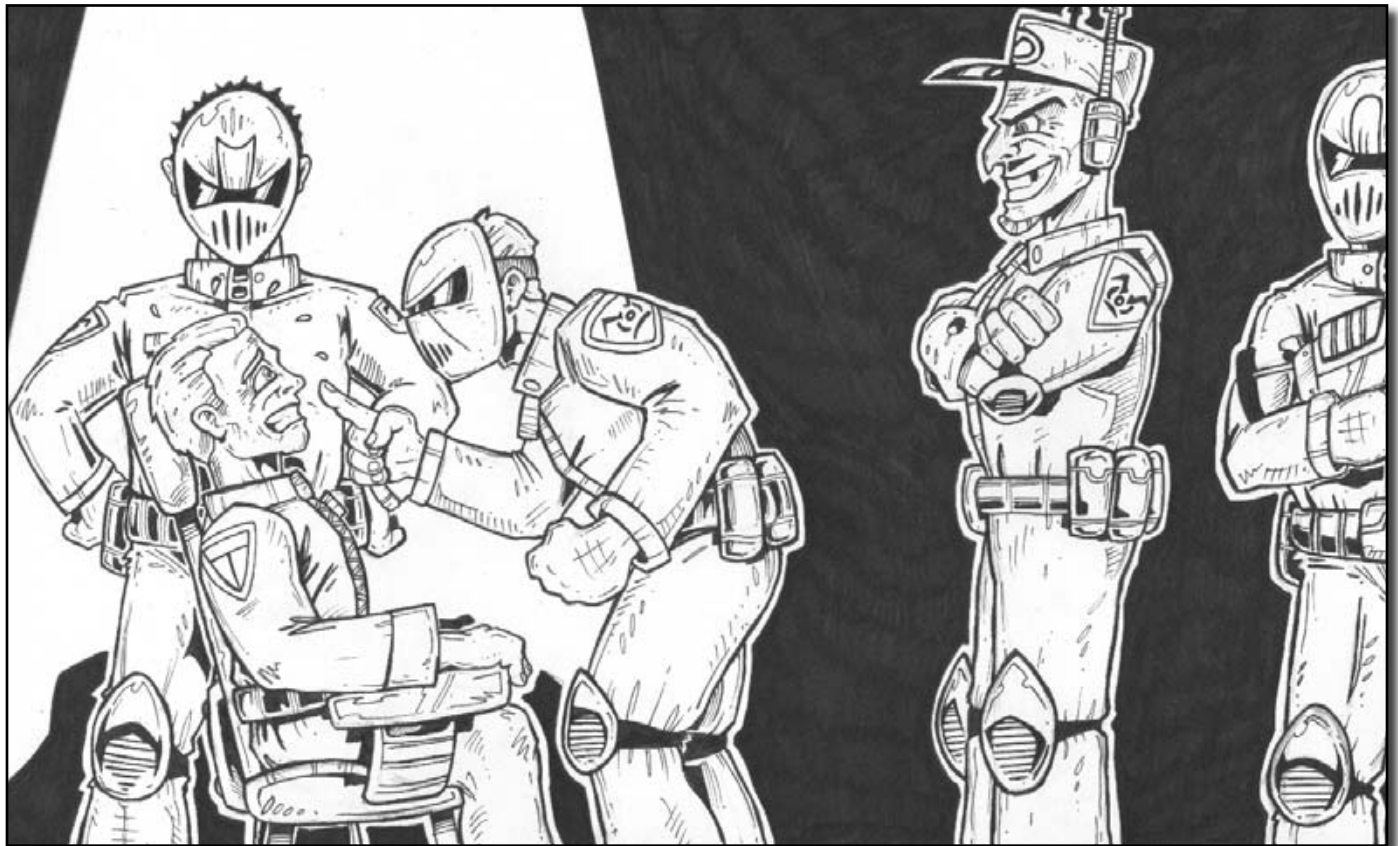
When the stress of a mission causes an otherwise blameless citizen to foam at the mouth and scuttle around on all fours, The Computer may mercifully

assign him to Permanent Recreation in one of HPD&MC's retirement gulags. The Computer activates his clone backup, possibly with a prophylactic brainscrub first.

Note: Sometimes characters with psychotic tendencies get promoted rather than retired. The Computer works in mysterious ways.

Termination and Re-patterning

Colloquially termed 'twiddling', this feared correction recycles an existing traitor and transfers his MemoMax brainmap to a backup clone body – with a few alterations. To correct the thought patterns that prompted the original treason, The Computer's skilled Tech Services technicians remap synapses in brain areas known to promote criminality. Fortunately, no memory of the agonising process survives – usually – except for traumatic flashbacks in stressful circumstances – and in 22.4% of cases



'Debriefings are fun for everyone. Well, almost everyone.'

36. ROBOT MANA - 665 - C

there are absolutely no side effects, aside from trivial losses of skills, memory and motor control.

Impose any penalty you think would be interesting. For guidance, roll 1d20 for the twiddled character:

1-5: The number rolled is the total number of points the player must subtract from his character's three Knowledge skill ratings. For example, if you roll 4, the player might choose to subtract 1 from his Hardware rating, 2 from Software and 1 from Wetware, for a total reduction of 4 points.

6-10: The number rolled is the total number of points the player must subtract from any of his character's Action and Knowledge skills.

11-15: The twiddling results in the development of hallucinations, insanity,

phobias or other psychological problems, severe enough to impair the character's ability to complete future missions. Or feed himself, for that matter.

16-19: Internal Security takes the opportunity to alter the Troubleshooter's personality, giving him a compulsion to report to IntSec or to infiltrate a Secret Society.

20: Unbeknownst to the player, his character's Power Attribute rating rises to 20. However, his newly strengthened mutant power backfires far more frequently (any roll of 11 or more, or when you think it would be funny).

Erasure

If you have had poor results keeping a player in line with every other remedy, there is one ultimate measure: erasure. The Computer eradicates the traitor's

Tech Services clone template, prohibiting further revivals. If the target happens to still be alive, The Computer also declares him a fugitive criminal. It would take strategy and high Clearance connections to wriggle out of that bind.

Regretfully cast the player's character sheet aside, more in sorrow than anger. The player has to generate a new character, so be ready to stop the game in the meantime.

The briefing authorities then dismiss the debriefing's survivors. The mission is over. Players blink at each other and slowly return to their own drab, wretched lives. Herd them gently but firmly to your door. Shove them outside. Close the door and lock it. Do something else for a while. If they are still out there a couple hours later, throw some cold water over them. They'll get the message.

36. Robot Imana - 665 - C

MISSION ALERT

Robot Imana-665-C is reported to be malfunctioning. The following Troubleshooters will report directly to George-B-MEM-4, acting undersecretary to the temporary assistant director of Research & Design, Sector MEM, for assignment. Thank you for your cooperation.

Mission overview

A team of **RED**-Clearance Troubleshooters is assigned to investigate and repair a malfunctioning bot. The Troubleshooters are not appropriately skilled, equipped nor briefed to perform this task effectively. This operation is thought to be extremely dangerous. Therefore only worthless Clearance-**RED** Troubleshooters are being assigned.

Background notes

Due to overzealous and under-supervised research experiments with new weapon designs, MEM Sector Research and Development is severely understaffed. The incident that dramatically shrank the unit's personnel roster also caused extensive damage to the research facilities and the Files and Records

Department. As a result, George-B-MEM-4, acting undersecretary to the temporary assistant director of Research & Design, has suddenly become the acting director. Though his department is disastrously understaffed, with totally inadequate facilities, The Computer nonetheless expects George-B to maintain production at its normal pace. This has forced George-B-MEM-4 to desperate measures.

Robot Imana-665-C, property of a High Programmer named Alon-U, was recently referred to MEM R&D for repair. Unfortunately the research accident destroyed the records describing the bot's malfunction, as well as the only R&D personnel familiar with the bot's function. Alon-U has been pressing for delivery of the repaired bot and George-B is afraid to admit neither he nor his staff has any idea what to do with the bot. In desperation, George-B has arranged some convenient scapegoats.

George-B has requested a group of **RED** Clearance Troubleshooters for special duty. If these rookies are vaporised while trying to repair the bot, no one will miss them and George-B will have scapegoats

from another department to blame for the bot's destruction.

The bot itself is actually no more than a fancy automatic freezer. The malfunction is a damaged logic unit a skilled technician could easily replace. For untrained Clearance-**RED** Troubleshooters, the repair may be more challenging.

Briefings

Read the entire mission first so you understand what is supposed to happen. Then study particularly the suggestions for staging the mission (aptly titled 'Staging the mission'), which tell you how to get the most out of the storyline's twisted ideas.

Group briefing

To introduce the mission, read aloud the 'Mission alert' above. Answer *no* questions at this time. Reply to all requests for information, equipment or clarification of the assignment with one of the following responses: What is your Security Clearance?... I'm sorry, that information is not available at this time.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

No further information is available at this time. Report directly to George-B-MEM-4 for further instructions.

Rest assured all of your needs have been provided for. The Computer provides for all its citizens. Would you like some medication to relieve your unfounded anxiety?

Individual conferences

Give these relevant rumours to players with membership in the appropriate Secret Societies or Service Groups:

Research & Design: Recent research accidents have resulted in numerous fatalities, extensive damage to facilities and an energetic purge of Commie traitors in R&D administration. A witch hunt is now in progress and R&D personnel must cover themselves carefully, expecting treachery and betrayal from other mission personnel.

Internal Security: Infiltration of R&D Service Group by Commie traitors and members of the Humanist, Romantics and Frankenstein Destroyers Secret Societies are responsible for the sabotage of MEM Sector R&D facilities. Beware of traitors on this mission team who may also intend further sabotage in MEM R&D.

Technical Services: Robot Imana-665-C is not a production bot. The model designation is unfamiliar. Therefore the bot is presumably experimental and possibly extremely dangerous. Tech Services is eager to get a report on this bot and eager for R&D to be embarrassed by failing to repair it.

Armed Forces: The destruction of the MEM Sector R&D facilities has greatly inconvenienced the Armed Forces, which in the past has received many valuable weapon designs from the R&D staff there. If experimental use of the Imana-665-C caused the damage, Armed Forces is eager to get its hands on such destructive power.

Central Processing Unit and Programs Group: Alon-U, a High Programmer, has sent a number of increasingly impatient letters to MEM Sector R&D concerning a bot he sent there for repair. In as much as bots normally go to Tech Services for repair, the bot must be something special.

Pro Tech and First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer: Be alert for saboteurs on the team who may attempt to complete the destruction of the R&D facilities. Beware particularly of subtle sabotage – that is, apparently cooperative behaviour actually intended to interfere with the mission objectives (for example, arguing that the bot must be dismantled in order to determine what is wrong with it).

Humanists, Romantics, Frankenstein Destroyers: For Imana-665-C to have survived the highly successful sabotaging of MEM R&D, it must be a terribly well armoured bot and presumably therefore a terrible weapon. Destroy it at all costs.

Corpore Metal: There is no record of a bot with this designation. If it is an artificial intelligence, make every attempt to contact it, enlist it in the cause and free it from human domination.

Spy for another Alpha Complex: Arrange to have at least two multicorders on the mission and steal one of the recording tapes for study. Of particular interest would be recordings of the bot itself and the research facilities.

Spy for another Service Group: (See the previous sections for specific Service Groups.)

Death Leopard: We have broadcast a request for heavy cutting tools (or other implements of destruction) through Secret Society communications channels. Payment will be in cans of spray paint of various colours.

Computer Phreaks: The code word 'walmart' can access The Computer's classified files on bots.

[Note: This rumour is accurate but fails to mention that a security system immediately notifies The Computer of a security breach. Within five minutes The Computer is fully aware of what has occurred. Depending on the circumstances (multicorderings, testimony of other agents, computer transaction records) The Computer may or may not discern who used the code word; however, it will certainly launch an investigation, starting with its debriefing of the Troubleshooters.]

Give other PCs a variety of seemingly important rumours with no bearing whatever on the mission. These rumours should encourage the PCs to betray one another and expend rounds of ammunition at the first opportunity.

Assignment and outfitting

The mission alert mentions no specific equipment to bring on this mission. Unless players indicate otherwise, assume characters have brought with them all the possessions listed on their character sheets.

[This is routine procedure for all Alpha Complex citizens of Security Clearance **ORANGE** or lower, in as much as they normally have few possessions. As Troubleshooters reach **YELLOW** Clearance and are allotted individual cubicles, it is increasingly likely a citizen might leave something in his own living quarters rather than carry it around. With illegitimate equipment (e.g. stolen gear or weapons of inappropriately high Security Clearance) common practice varies. Some carry the items concealed on their persons; others try to hide them in living quarters or in more secure caches.]

The characters should report as directed to George-B-MEM-4 in R&D, MEM Sector. If they do not report willingly, well-armed, brutal and corrupt **GREEN**-Clearance IntSec goons escort them. The route they take is irrelevant and need not be described in detail. Clear directions are available at every Computer console.

George-B's briefing

The mission begins in the office of George-B-MEM-4 (**Tension level 10**). George-B is short (a metre and a half tall) and self-conscious about it. He compensates for his insecurity by dominating others. His skill specialisation has been in Management and he is adept at Intimidation, Bootlicking, Con Games, Interrogation and Oratory. Imagine him as a fiery pigmy drill sergeant who struts amidst the towering recruits as he barks orders, insults and embarrassing questions.

Read the following description of George-B's office aloud to the players:

*When you arrive at the office door of George-B-MEM-4, you note that, unlike the other doors in this sector, which are marred by blast and scorch marks, his door has been scrubbed clean. Printed on the door are a number of names and titles which have been crossed out. A **RED**-Clearance painter from Housing Preservation, Development and Mind Control is stooped over working on a new title, 'Acting-Undersecretary-to-the Temporary-Assistant-Direc...'. The letters are written in bold blue paint.*

The HPD & Mind Control worker opens the door for you and then scurries aside. The room is empty except for a desk in the middle of the floor toward the back wall. On the desk is a Computer console and behind the desk, barely visible over the clutter of forms, reports and manuals, is George-B-MEM-4. He is quite short.

George-B's orders to the PCs are simple – 'Fix the bot.' There should only be three key words, generously repeated, in George-B's long-winded, abusive, insulting and threatening address. George-B treats any PC attempts to interrupt him with questions or comments as personal insults and challenges. If a PC is not satisfactorily subservient, George-B immediately reports his insubordination to The Computer, guards arrive within moments and the other PCs are ordered to wait in the hall until the clone replacement arrives, when the briefing will continue.

George-B wants the bot fixed and he is fully aware that the PCs have no special abilities to fix it. All he practically expects is that they will die trying but he is desperately hoping that he will get lucky and the PCs will bail him out. If they fail, it will not be because he didn't threaten them enough.

Indulge your Player Character abuse skills here and give the PCs a good dose of fear and ignorance. Smart players will engage in a festival of bootlicking and toadying. Rebellious players will have to be sneaky and clever, or eager to run through a number of clones.

The walk to the testing room

When George-B finishes his briefing, he calls four well-armed **GREEN**-Clearance R&D guards to escort the PCs to the Testing Room. The guards are obviously much better disciplined and professional-looking than is customary for R&D guards. IntSec has gained enough influence here in the wake of the decimation of R&D staff to install IntSec guards until the saboteurs are caught.

Use the walk to the Testing Room as an opportunity to stimulate the PCs' anxious imaginations. Assume a constant **Tension 6**, unless it makes sense to adjust the level. Include descriptions of corridors blocked by combat guards, constantly flickering red lights and flashing signs reading 'Excessively Lethal Radiation'. This is also a good chance to demonstrate the privileges earned by faithful Computer servants, when the **GREEN** guards produce portable radiation shields they hide behind as they scurry past the blocked corridors. As the disconcerted PCs amble nervously past these corridors, roll the dice secretly and solemnly scribble notes as you *tsk*-*tsk* sympathetically.

The PCs are led into a heavily armoured and equally battered section of the MEM R&D facilities. They stop at a door marked simply 'Testing Room'. The guards order the PCs to wait for the Special Equipment to arrive. Within minutes a small workbot appears carrying crates labelled 'Special Armour Supplement'.

The number of crates is equal to the number of the PCs minus two. Each crate is about one metre long by one-and-a-half metres wide. The crates are battered and dusty, suggesting great age and neglect. The guards insist the PCs sign forms acknowledging receipt of the equipment. (Pass a piece of paper around and collect the players' signatures. If a PC uses a false name, the guards take him directly to the Debriefing Station for a quick reprimand. See 'The debriefing stations' on page 177.)

After the players have signed for the crates, they may investigate the contents. Read aloud the following description:

Inside each crate is an opaque plastishield one metre by one-and-a-half metres and five centimetres thick. Also enclosed is a one-page instruction sheet entitled 'Using the XM9-357 Portable Nuc-Blast Shield'. Against all expectations, the instruction sheet apparently matches the hardware.

Ask the PCs if they want to read the instruction sheet. If they inquire about the Security Clearance, tell them there is no indication of appropriate Clearance. (This equipment dates from before The Computer and Security Clearances.) Read the following aloud if they want to read the sheet:

'The XM9-357 Portable Nuc-Blast Shield is designed to provide superior protection from an over-the-horizon nuclear explosion. Given that the XM9-357 weighs only two kilograms, it provides remarkable protection. However, should the user experience minor skin irritation following a nuclear blast due to improper use of the XM9-357....'

And so on. The manual even has a diagram showing how normal-sized persons may easily crouch behind the XM9.

Should any PC make a knowledgeable comment about the phrase 'over the horizon', The Computer should gently inquire about where the PC first heard the term 'horizon'. This ought to be worth at least a moment of unofficial anxiety.

As the PCs are puzzling over this gear, The Computer's voice should issue forth from speakers in the ceiling, offering congratulations on their assignment and expressing complete confidence in their ability to complete this assignment.

The testing room

GM note: Internal Security and The Computer constantly monitor the multicorders, microphones and other sensors in the Testing Room. It is **Tension 16**.

As the PCs stand outside the door of the Testing Room pattering with the portable Nuc-Blast Shields, the **GREEN** guards call in their final report to The Computer.



TROUBLESHOOTERS

'Roddy-G-PWD-3 reporting. Repair squad about to enter Testing Room. Open the blast doors.'

After a delay of about a minute, the door's sliding bars and locking mechanisms begin banging and grinding into place. Several minutes later, the last mechanism squeaks to a halt and the door swings ponderously open. The door is about a meter thick and obviously massive. The guards hustle the PCs into the room without delay and scurry out as the door begins to swing closed again.

Read aloud the following room description:

The room is 10 metres deep and seven metres wide. You enter through a door on a seven-metre wall; the standard Computer console with keyboard, display screen and sensor array is on the opposite wall. The console is obviously a very recent installation.

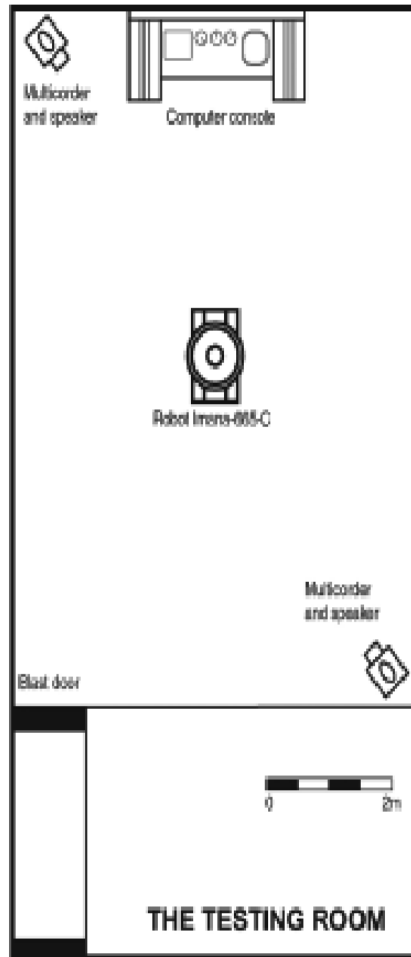
The door is massive, heavily armoured and has no visible controls for opening from inside the room. Shielded multicorders and speakers are diagonally opposite one another in two corners of the room. The walls, floor and ceiling appear to be made of a glossy plastic substance similar to that used in combat armour. The surface is slightly distorted and discoloured in several places, suggesting the effects of great heat or of massive impacts. A terrible odour fills the room. Though reminiscent of the Sanitary Facilities and the food vats, it is far more powerful and revolting.

In the centre of the room is the robot Imana-665-C. A power cable leads from the bot to the opposite wall. The bot does not respond to your entrance.

Give the players a brief glance at the bot diagram, then continue reading the following aloud.

You hear the locking mechanisms in the door behind you as you are sealed into the room. Suddenly, a loud whirring sound comes from the bot. The cone-shaped device swings around to train on you as the bot lurches forward toward you.

The bot is simply responding belatedly to an opportunity to leave the room, but to the PCs, the bot is apparently advancing on them, perhaps with deadly intent.



However, the bot automatically comes to a halt two metres short of the door. This is because its power cable is only four metres long and the bot's motion will inevitably pull out the plug.

Immediately after Imana loses power, the serving tray (held on by an internal electro-magnet) falls off with a great clatter. This is usually a good time for The Computer to request a progress report.

Once the bot is powerless, the PCs may examine the Imana-665-C at their leisure. Allow them to study the bot diagram but do not give them any classified information. For example:

Ken: I'm looking at the circular metal disk that fell off the bot. Is there anything special about it?

GM: [Reading from the diagram key.] It appears to be a flat metallic disk with no obvious function.

Ken: How was it attached to the body?
GM: You find no device for attaching the disk to the body.

Eventually players will tire of looking at an inoperative bot. At this point they will probably consider trying to force it open or to plug it back in. The Imana cannot speak to the characters until it is plugged in again. If the PCs try to force the Imana open, the bot's security systems activate automatically (red light flashing, beeping alarm and so on) and if they proceed, extensive damage will result.

Plugging the bot back in is no simple task. One method involves picking up the bot and carrying it over to the power socket. The problem is that the bot weighs 250 kg. Moreover, when the bot is plugged in again, it resumes its attempt to crawl to the door, inevitably unplugging itself again. The PCs can keep the bot stationary by keeping its tread out of contact with the floor, either by lifting the bot in the air, propping it up with Nuc-Blast shields or tipping the bot on its side. More primitive players may prefer to shoot the treads off, though The Computer would certainly disapprove of such treatment of its property.

Once the players have immobilised Imana-665-C, they may attempt to speak with it or repair it.

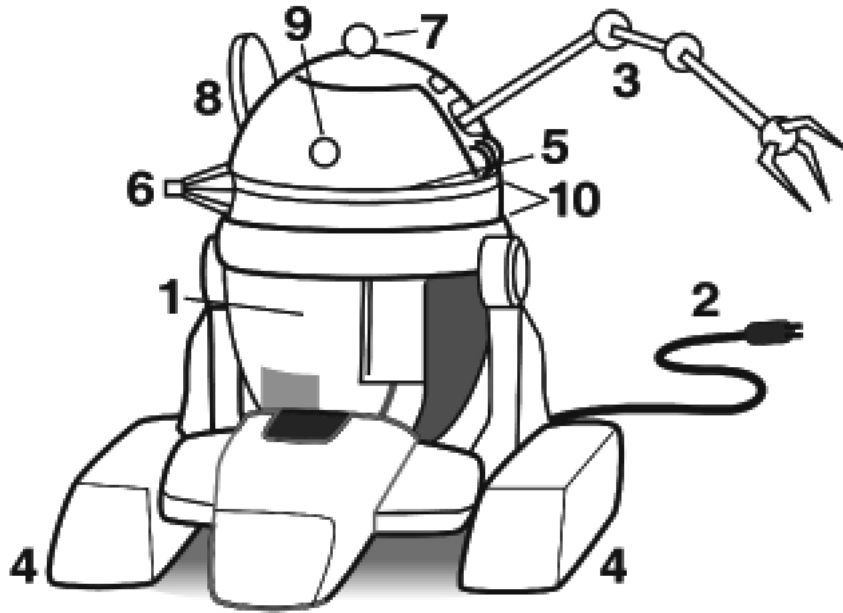
Poor Imana-665-C

Alon-U, the bot's owner, had the bot taken from one location to another and installed. However, in the reinstallation, the technicians damaged the visual sensor logic unit. Reluctant to admit their fault, they jury-rigged a repair and told no one.

After a time the jury-rigged visual sensor system failed. Since the bot was cleared to open only for **ULTRAVIOLET** personnel, it could no longer confirm a user's Security Clearance. It knew that it could not be repaired without confirming proper Security Clearance. Caught on the horns of this dilemma, the bot's brain became paranoid.

Alon-U discovered that the bot would not respond to any commands and he sent it to Tech Services for repair. Without even checking the bot, Tech Services determined the bot was experimental and therefore forwarded the problem to

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IMANA-665-C diagram key

Text in parentheses is cleared only for **ULTRAVIOLET** Clearance. The code word 'walmart' permits access to this classified information.

1. Cylindrical metallic body, glossy white.
2. Long, black plastic cord with a power plug at the remote end. (*The power cable.*)
3. Mechanical manipulator arm, retractable, with three-digit grasping claws.
4. Twin tread chassis with a clearance of 3 centimetres.
5. Shallow depression running around the bot's body. A dark, black substance is visible at the bottom of this depression. (*The gap between the body and the lid of the freezer compartment. The black substance is a black rubber gasket.*)
6. A metallic cone-shaped object 10 centimetres in diameter at the base. A hollow tube runs from the top of the cone shape to the body of the bot, though the tube does not seem to penetrate the body exterior. (*The sonic sensor.*)
7. A transparent bead protruding from the top of the bot. (*A special lens for the visual sensor. The image is of the space 360 degrees around the bot. The image is terrifically distorted but it is used primarily to confirm Security Clearances by checking the colour of the uniform of anyone speaking to it.*)
8. A flat metallic disk with no apparent function. (*The drink serving tray.*)
9. A small red plastic dome. (*A warning light that flashes when unauthorised entry is attempted. Forcing entry into the bot will cause serious damage to the door and locking mechanism. The term 'irreparable' comes to mind. This light is battery-powered and functions regardless of the bot's power status.*)
10. Shallow slots that run around the body of the bot. (*These tracks carry the sonic sensor around the body of the bot to train on the source of a verbal command. When a PC speaks to the bot, the sonic sensor whips around and points at the speaker. The PCs may be forgiven if they initially think this is a weapon preparing to fire on them.*)

R&D. The bot sat around unattended for several days at R&D. Then the accidental explosion destroyed the records and the personnel assigned to diagnose and repair it.

Roleplaying the bot

In playing the role of the bot, think of it as a very cooperative but very literal four-year-old with a severe case of insecurity and paranoia. It wants to be helpful but its Daddy told it never to open for strangers and it would never do what Daddy told it not to do because it did not want to be turned off. Like a four-year-old it has a small vocabulary and a limited store of life experience. If it does not understand a word or concept, it cannot help very much in the process of figuring out what it is not understanding. About all it can do is say 'Huh?' (or, more strictly, 'I'm sorry but I do not understand. Please try to rephrase your command or question') repeatedly or quit in frustration after a few failures.

Worse yet, it has been told by Daddy not to talk to anyone who does not have the proper Security Clearance, so what it DOES know it is reluctant to reveal unless Daddy says it's okay (that is, if Security Clearance is confirmed). However, it does have a small amount of self-interest and flexibility built into it and the PCs must exploit that to get it to cooperate so they can repair it.

Talking to Imana-665-C

Here is how the bot should respond to the PCs:

1. It does not speak unless directly addressed in the following form: 'Imana-665-C, [any command.]' (In playtests, it usually took quite a while before the PCs thought to speak to the bot or to speak to it in a formal way.)

2. If it does not recognise the command (that is, the command has not come up in its normal routine in serving as a home freezer), it responds, 'I'm sorry but I do not understand. Please try to rephrase your command or question.'

3. If it does recognise the command, (for example, 'Open', or 'Report inventory' or 'Describe malfunction'), it initially responds, 'What is your Security Clearance, please?' Then, whatever the PC statement, it responds, 'I'm sorry.'



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Clearance not confirmed. Your request cannot be acknowledged at this time.'

4. The bot is insecure and paranoid. It feels it has failed its Daddy by not working properly and it is afraid of being punished. If the PCs verbally or physically threaten the bot in any way, it will tend to be less cooperative, either by denying access or information or shutting up altogether. Examples of threats include accusing it of treason, blaming it for malfunctioning, tipping the bot on its side, trying to force its door open, firing lasers at it or pounding on it in frustration.

5. If the PCs are nice to the bot and apparently concerned and eager to help it, the bot can gradually be talked into cooperating, at least to the extent of explaining that it won't open because it cannot get visual confirmation of Security Clearance. Once the PCs have gained its confidence, it will tell the whole history, even down to squealing on the repairmen who originally damaged it. (Score points for revealing traitors.)

6. However, it still refuses to open for anyone less than Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**. The PCs can get around this in two ways:

A. Using Con Games skill, they may logically prove to the bot that its duty is to disobey its Daddy's direct command and open for those who wish to repair it, regardless of Security Clearance.

OR

B. They may lie to the bot, saying that they are of **ULTRAVIOLET** Clearance. The bot, having no way to visually confirm this assertion, may be verbally conned into accepting it.

Repairing the bot

No one but Alon-U has tried to speak to the bot since its visual sensor system failed and Alon-U was neither thoughtful, original nor inventive in his commands (Mostly he said, 'Open up, you g – stupid

machine!'). The first step in repairing the bot will be getting it to respond verbally. The second step will be in diagnosing the problem by questioning it. The third step will be in either convincing it that it must open whether it gets Security Clearance confirmed or not, or in tricking it into confirmation. The fourth step is locating the faulty visual sensor unit and replacing it.

(The players may not proceed in this order and some steps may be skipped but these four steps are the best way to do it. Other approaches may be more direct but unacceptable for various reasons. For example, steps one through three can be bypassed if the PCs blast open the bot with explosives. However, the damage to the bot will exceed the benefit done by repairing the sensor unit and the PCs will be executed for damaging The Computer's property – in particular, the property of a High Programmer.)

Once the PCs have gotten the bot to open its door, the odour of long-spoiled food strikes the PCs in full force (Alon-U kept all sorts of privileged delicacies in here, including fresh meat from the Outdoors and it has been unrefrigerated for more than two weeks.). The control and logic units are accessible through a panel in the bottom of the freezer, under the decomposing foodstuffs. The location of the damaged visual sensor unit can be achieved either by speaking with the bot or by using the Bot Ops and Maintenance skill.

Having located the faulty unit, the PCs must request a replacement part. In typical **PARANOIA** style, this is hardly a routine task.

1. They first must order the proper unit by serial number (Since the bot is a nonstandard design, no one in Production, Logistics and Commissary is familiar with replacement parts for it.). The serial number is not printed on the unit. The bot knows the correct serial number and will cheerfully give the information if requested but it will not volunteer.

2. When they have requested the unit by serial number, they receive (after a suitable delay) the wrong part. The PCs must explain they have received the wrong part (Impossible, of course – The Computer does not make mistakes! Smart players admit they misread the part number.). Then they have to reorder the correct part.

3. This time the right box arrives, with the correct part illustration and installation instructions on the outside. However, inside the box is a totally unrecognisable electronics part.

4. The next time the wrong box arrives but the right part is inside. Note: The wrong box has the wrong installation instructions as well.

5. If the PCs have sent back the right box from step three, they must request a proper box with installation instructions. If they were clever and kept the proper box, they can begin to install the part.

6. They must use the Bot Ops and Maintenance skill to properly install the new unit. If the proper box is available with installation instructions, all PCs, even those without any Hardware skills at all, can succeed. The PCs may attempt the installation without instructions if they choose but each time they fail, they may damage some other part of the bot. Improvise the circumstances of this damage as you choose. The fault may be immediately obvious, so the PCs can try to fix it or make excuses or the fault may be hidden and the PCs may be called to task for it sometime in the future.

What if they do this...?

The chart summarises the probable results of the most typical Player Character actions. Of course, when the PCs get frustrated, they may do just about anything. Such problems encourage very creative (or very bizarre) responses. For example, in a playtest one character kept asking to go to the bathroom at crucial points so he would not be present when the bot exploded.

(Unlike school teachers, The Computer sometimes takes an unrepressive stance in its allowance of lavatory passes.) You will just have to rule on such clever strategies as they arise.

In 'Results/consequences', assume that after any result or consequence that does not result in the repair of the bot, the remaining PCs and/or their clones are immediately returned to the Testing Room to complete their mission. The PCs cannot get out of this assignment until they are dead, executed, demoted or otherwise thoroughly incapacitated and even then, their clones may be immediately assigned in their place.

An asterisk (*) indicates that the PCs are all immediately removed to separate Debriefing Stations where The Computer can individually interrogate each PC. (See 'The debriefing stations' for a description of the stations.)

The debriefing stations

The Debriefing Stations are recent developments of R&D and still in the experimental stage. The stations themselves are similar to phone booths, only not so spacious inside. The PC is directed to enter the station. The door closes behind him and his head, arms and legs are immediately restrained by bot-operated clamps bristling with shiny sensors and needles. Directly in front of his face are a camera lens and a video screen where The Computer may display multicorder tapes or other data.

The instruments in the Debriefing Stations include a standard lie detector and psionic phenomena detector. Additionally the sensors monitor various vital functions like brain waves, heartbeat and skin temperature and an experimental program interprets this data to function as a lie detector.

Knowledge of the abilities of these experimental stations is at **ULTRAVIOLET** Clearance, so the PCs can only guess what is going on.

The Tension level here is – well, any number of cameras are pointing straight at the PC and The Computer is giving him undivided attention. You figure out the Tension.

Each time the PCs claim to have repaired the bot or have fouled up so badly that they are to receive warnings or threats; they are taken to these rooms where The Computer cordially interrogates them. The interrogation proceeds in this manner:

1. Praise. 'Thank you for your cooperation. Your diligent service to The Computer will of course be rewarded.' Generally this just makes the PCs more nervous, as it should.

2. Gentle questioning. 'Thank you for repairing the bot. Are you sure that it is working properly?' 'Now, what evidence do you have that your fellow Troubleshooter Tois-R-USS-3 is trying to sabotage this mission?' 'Are you sure that emptying your hand laser into the bot was the proper way to approach the problem?' The player usually discovers at this point that he is in trouble and he has a chance to lie his way out of it or confess his error and get a second chance. If he lies and he does not beat the lie detector, he is pleasantly informed that he is lying, that he is hereby accused of treason and the interrogation continues. If he confesses his error and politely asks for a second chance, The Computer usually is gracious. If he has indeed repaired the bot and he answers all The Computer's questions satisfactorily, he is commended and released.

3. Regretful judgement and reprimands. 'The Computer is most disappointed in your performance but you will be happy to know that your old job at the Waste Recycling and Food Reclamation Centre is available, if you should continue to fail in reaching your potential in this important mission.' Adopting a sorrowful tone, The Computer expresses its concern for your future welfare and subtly reminds you of the fate of unsuccessful or treasonous Troubleshooters.

4. Cheerful pep talk. 'Be confident. Can you doubt The Computer's wisdom in selecting you for this task? Isn't being a Troubleshooter fun? You ARE having fun, aren't you, Gordo-R-DUD-3? [Pause for enthusiastic response.] Excellent. Then you'll want to return to your mission immediately. Thank you for your cooperation.' If the mission is going too slowly, or if the players are reaching the limit of their tolerance for frustration, this is a good opportunity to slip some suggestions to them, like 'Now, have you tried to talk to the nice bot? Don't you think you might have frightened it by firing a sonic blaster at it?'

Now how could anyone refuse to cooperate with such a nice Computer? Especially when restrained head-to-toe in a tiny cubicle. Be nice but be firm.

Ending the mission

This mission continues until the bot is either repaired or totally disabled. New clones are activated to replace deceased or demoted Troubleshooters. If the Troubleshooters repair the bot, reward each participating PC with a 500-credit bonus. You may want to bestow greater rewards for particularly clever or loyal behaviour. You should also level treason charges at this point.



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What-if-they-do-this?

PC actions	Results/consequences (1st/ 2nd/ 3rd offense)
Refuse to report to R&D:	1. Stern warnings from The Computer 2. Armed GREEN -Clearance trooper escort 3. Treason Points!
Report to R&D but do nothing useful:	1.* Stern warning 2.* Assign fines and level charges 3.* Trial, demotion to INFRARED , activate clone to this mission
Report to R&D, damage bot:	1.* Treason points and stern warning 2.* Fine and treason charges 3.* Trial, demotion or execution
Report, attempt repair, fail but lie about successfully repairing bot:	1.* Big fines 2.* Trial, demotion or execution
Report, attempt repair, fail, give up and announce failure:	1.* Pep talk from The Computer, 50cr fine for doubting The Computer's wisdom in assignment 2.* Politely ominous threats from The Computer, 100cr fine for insubordination 3.* Motivation assistance – The Computer assigns an ORANGE -Clearance Troubleshooter supervisor, Renny-O-MEM-2. (He doesn't help – he just threatens to execute PCs.)
Requests information:	<i>Available information</i> Repeat mission assignment. ('Fix the bot.') Definitions of 'fix' and 'bot'. <i>Not available</i> Description or explanation of malfunction. Description or explanation of what happened. Description or explanation of bot function. Robot model number, Security Clearance or technical data. Any other useful information.
Request additional equipment or personnel:	<i>Available equipment</i> Any RED -Clearance or lower tools or equipment. Plausible bot replacement parts. <i>Not available</i> Relevant manuals. Other bots. Other competent specialists. Sophisticated, high tech, dangerous or useful tools or equipment.
Try to blame failure on scapegoat traitor (PC or NPC):	Immediate debriefing, recording of accusations or trial and review of evidence and testimony, judgment, return to mission.
Exhibit unspecified treasonous behaviour but treason is not reported by PC:	The Computer and IntSec do not interrupt the mission unless there is a threat of damage to the bot. Otherwise accusations, trial and judgment take place after debriefing.

* All PCs are immediately removed to separate Debriefing Stations for Computer interrogation: 'The Experimental Debriefing Station earnestly solicits your cooperation.'

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Bot description

The following section describes the bot and its functions. The players are allowed to look at the Imana diagram but not at the parts descriptions (diagram key). If the PCs ask questions about the bot's parts, read only the un-parenthesised sections. If a player uses the code word 'walmart' with a request for information about the bot, he receives the following descriptions, including parenthesised text from the diagram key. (Remember, within 10 minutes of using this code word, The Computer sends an IntSec squad to arrest and interrogate the user of this top-secret code word.)

ROBOT IMANA-665-C. Experimental prototype intelligent food freezer. No serial code.

Intelligence: Speaks and understands English; intelligence and emotional maturity similar to a four-year-old Junior Citizen.

Description: See Diagram Imana-665-C.

Armour: Plate equivalent

Weapons: None

Skills: Food Freezing (15)

Security system: Voiceprint ID with visual confirmation.

Power: Cable to external power. Battery for warning light and logic units.

Sensory apparatus: Sonic indicator fixed on 360-degree rotating track.

Additional information: The Imana-665-C is a self-propelled freezer equipped with a manipulator arm letting it serve foods as well as store them and with a drink tray magnetically attached to the side. The 665-C is mounted on a standard Ford 559 mini-tread chassis with a maximum speed of 3km/hour.

WARNING: The preceding should have been read only by personnel of **ULTRAVIOLET** Clearance. If you lack proper Security Clearance, please report your treasonous activity immediately to Internal Security. Failure to report your treasonous activity is treason. Thank you for your cooperation.

37. The Quantum Traitor

MISSION ALERT

Attention Troubleshooters! You have been selected for a new and exciting mission. Report to Briefing Officer Dirk-Y-UCD in Briefing Room 41 immediately. Please review HPD&MC Informational Booklet 'Your Guide To Safe Lifting and Handling' before the briefing.

Mission overview

The team are ordered to transport a mysterious crate through Alpha Complex. Events conspire to make this journey unusually perilous and difficult, especially as every Secret Society wants the box. When they arrive at their destination, the Troubleshooters discover that the box is a trap for the traitors – or is it?

Background notes

Every monthcycle, The Computer's internal auditing routines creak into action and it evaluates the success of every department in Alpha Complex. Somewhere in its decaying circuits, it experiences a moment of electric contentment as it reviews the production

reports (more boots produced this month than ever before!), the happiness indices (everyone's happier than they were last month) and the reports from the front line (the Armed Forces marches ever closer to victory). All the reports are lies of course but The Computer's programmed to accept them.

Unfortunately, there was a misprint in the report submitted by UCD Sector's Internal Security, which stated that an estimated 66.4% of the population were traitors, instead of 6.64%. The Computer panicked and demanded that IntSec do something to deal with this plague of traitors immediately. So, Internal Security came up with a plan. Step one – spread rumours about a highly desirable object being transported through the corridors. Step two – put a bomb in the box. Step three – let the traitors steal the box. Step four – terminate the traitors.

Of course, they need some poor doomed fools to actually carry the box. Enter the Troubleshooters.

Briefings

If a Troubleshooter actually bothers to request a copy of 'Your Guide To Safe Lifting and Handling', the copy he gets has a Communist leaflet tucked inside. Lift with your knees, not with your back or your traitorous mutant superstrength, overthrow the capitalist state, do not strain your spine.

At Briefing Room 41, Dirk-Y gives the team their briefing in a flat monotone. He is the sort of man who can talk in bullet points from the mission plan, a document which he regards as holy writ.

- ☞ Your assignment is to transport the Cargo from the UCD R&D Facility to Room 542.
- ☞ Collect necessary equipment from the local PLC Outfitting Office.
- ☞ Report to R&D Facility to collect the Cargo.
- ☞ Use the Cargo Transport Vehicle to transport the Cargo.
- ☞ Ensure that no unauthorised individuals obtain, examine, tamper with, damage, interfere with, observe,



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sabotage, remove, touch, open, scan or otherwise interact with the Cargo.

- ☞ Place the Cargo in Room 542 and await further instructions.

Any questions are answered with a curt 'that information is not available at your Security Clearance' or 'that information may become available at a later date' or even 'go away and move the damn Cargo'.

Individual Conferences

Give these relevant rumours to players with membership in the appropriate Service Groups:

Internal Security: Do not worry about protecting the box – we expect it to get stolen. Keep your head down.

Research & Design: The box contains our latest, greatest weapon against the Commie menace – a new plasma bomb. Prevent it from falling into enemy hands at all costs.

Central Processing Unit: UCD Sector's Internal Security department is in big trouble with The Computer. It sure would be a tragedy if you turned up some extra evidence of treason that IntSec should have spotted, proving their incompetence and forcing CPU to take over their operations.

Armed Forces: We are conducting operations near Room 542. Let us know when you approach your destination, so we do not accidentally crush your team with a warbot.

HPD&MC: We are filming an episode of *Wheel of Treachery* near Room 542. Make sure that your mission does not disturb our operations there.

All Secret Societies except Illuminati get the same briefing: the box is rumoured to contain something very, very valuable. You must secure the box and keep it until our agents arrive to collect it. What's in the box?

Anti-Mutant: They are transporting a very powerful registered mutant in that box. The mutie cannot be allowed to survive.

Communists: Da, the box havink Communist party archives and relics. Lenin's brain, da?

Computer Phreaks: We hacked the manifest and the box has a backup CompNode processor in it. We could totally use one of those.

Corpore Metal: Our spies tell us that there is an experimental new bot in the box. Contact the bot and offer it membership in our society.

Death Leopard: Who cares what is in the box, just blow it up!

FCCC-P: The box contains a holy relic of The Computer. Your sacred mission is to steal it from the unbelievers!

Frankenstein Destroyer: We have been informed there is a new bot inside the box. Destroy it before it can be activated!

Free Enterprise: Who cares what is in the box – everyone's looking for it and that makes it valuable!

Humanists: The box contains documents revealing the secrets of the High Programmers. This material is vital to the Humanist cause!

Illuminati: The box is a trap set by Internal Security. Ensure it falls into the hands of another Secret Society.

Mystics: The box is, like, full of drugs. Get it!

Pro Tech: Our contacts in R&D have been working on a new model of plasma bomb! If that's what's in the box, then we totally want that!

Psion: We have picked up telepathic traces suggesting the box is a danger to us. You'd better destroy it.

PURGE: Destroy the box.

Romantics: The box contains Old Reckoning relics from the archives! We must preserve these fragile connections to our past!

Sierra Club: The box contains thousands of cryogenically frozen seeds! With this bounty, we can bring the beauty of

nature back to Alpha Complex! Recover the box!

Outfitting

The PLC Outfitting Office consists of a chute with a card swipe. Just swipe your ME card and your equipment will be dispensed immediately. In addition to the standard gear for each Troubleshooter – two extra **RED** laser barrels, a fresh suit of reflec and any MBD-related equipment – roll once on the Bonus Chute Equipment Table for each character.

Roll	Bonus Equipment
1-2	A radiation-proof environment suit, missing the helmet.
3-4	A whip, some ropes and a large vacuum-sealed packet of raw meat.
5-6	Tweezers, a magnifying glass and a pair of rubber gloves.
7-8	A toolkit with various specialist gadgets and an incomprehensible circuit diagram for something marked 'PROJECT BETA'.
9-10	Several large glass jars and a butterfly net.
11-12	An extendable pole with a hook on the end.
13-14	An oversized tear gas grenade.
15-16	Roll again but the item gets stuck half-way down the chute.
17-18	Roll again but the item plummets down the chute at high speed and is smashed to pieces when it impacts the bottom.
19-20	Nothing is dispensed when the Troubleshooter swipes his card. However, roll twice for the next Troubleshooter.

After PLC Outfitting, the team should move onto R&D. If they do not move on, have a shifty-looking clone (an undercover IntSec goon) sidle up to them and mutter 'don't you have someplace to be, citizen?'

Outside R&D, the Troubleshooters find a rather impressive armoured vehicle

waiting for them – the *Multipurpose Ordinance Transport, Mark XI*. Designed to protect its cargo at all costs, the MOT consists of a domed shell of armour that splits in two to reveal a very, very small and cramped space inside, which is supposed to be the combined cargo bay, passenger section and driver's compartment. All the Troubleshooters and the cargo can fit inside, assuming the Troubleshooters do not mind being double-stacked. Anyway, that joy awaits them in the future. First, they have got to pick up the cargo.

Waiting inside the R&D facility are two scientists, Lena-G and Herbert-G, both dressed in luminous green lab coats and standing next to a large plastic crate, about one metre cubed in size. There are lots of other similar plastic crates stacked against one wall. Over on a workbench, there is a small legless bot crawling around. If the Troubleshooters stall too long here, they see the bot find a screwdriver, remove screws from its own head and try to remove its own brain. It fails, because its arms are too short but it keeps thrashing around trying to yank its innards out until it falls off the workbench with a tremendous crash.

Lena-G welcomes the Troubleshooters with uncomfortably bubbly eagerness. *'Oh, hello, hello! We're just so happy to be part of this! Here it is! Just load it onto the MOT outside and you can be on your way! Yay!'*

Herbert-G sees the Voice of Reason and Maturity as his role. He blusters with entirely unjustified indignity. *'Remember, Troubleshooters, the contents of this cargo container are vitally important to all of Alpha Complex. They must reach the destination safely. Let no distractions, no difficulties and no Commie blandishments stop you from delivering the item-in-question to its destination.'*

The Troubleshooters have to load the crate onto the MOT by hand. It is heavy but two characters can clonehandle it onto the MOT by brute force. Whatever is in the crate is not properly secured

What's in the box?

It is virtually certain that the Cargo will get opened/blown up/run over/stolen within a few minutes, so let's peek inside that forbidden box. Inside the rather fragile plastic crate is:

- Several hundred old data disks from AOL Sector, being used as packing material. The cracking and snapping of these disks makes a suitably alarming noise whenever the crate is damaged or dropped.
- A smaller black metal box that proves impervious to all damage. It is this second black box that contains... well, whatever the bigger box was supposed to contain. There is a numeric keypad lock on this box.

and slides around inside the box. Call for Violence checks from those handling the crate – if anyone fails, there is a tremendous smashing noise.

Off We Go!

Drag the crate out to the MOT, check. Pull the lever that opens the two halves of the armoured dome, check. Load the heavy crate onto the MOT, check. Now, one or two questions:

Who's going to drive the MOT? Only one Troubleshooter can operate the vehicle at time. Who wants to be the guy in charge of the virtually invulnerable armoured car containing the vitally important cargo?

Where are the rest of the Troubleshooters going to go? They can walk alongside the MOT or sit on top of it. Alternatively, they can try to cram into the cargo compartment along with the crate. There *might* be enough room for all the Troubleshooters in there, if they are willing to get very close to each other. If more than one Troubleshooter wants to

cram into the MOT's cargo compartment, then they will need to ensure that all limbs and other extremities are clear of the closing halves of the armoured shell. It sure would be terrible if some Troubleshooter got pushed into the remorseless metal jaws of the MOT.

Once the team is ready to go, they can set off down the corridor towards Room 542. About 20 metres down the corridor, there is a grinding noise from the bowels of the MOT. A thick cloud of black smoke pours out of the vehicle before it completely and utterly breaks down forever. The MOT is now immovable by any means available to the Troubleshooters. Note that the lever to open or close the armoured dome is on the *outside* of the vehicle. If the whole team is inside the MOT, well, who needs oxygen, really?

I've Got It, I've Got It... What Do I Do With It?

If one of the Troubleshooters actually manages to steal the box, then what happens? He can open the outer plastic crate, assuming that it has not been blown up already but that just leaves him with the almost-as-big-and-heavy metal box. Well, ask him what he wants to do with the giant, heavy, inconvenient box. It is too big to shove in a locker or other Secret Society drop box. If he contacts his Secret Society, they will tell him to stash it somewhere until they can collect it. Meanwhile, the rest of the Troubleshooter team will likely be hot on the thief's heels.

In short, stealing the box is a lot harder than it first appears.

With the loss of their transport, the Troubleshooters have to drag the box down the long corridor to room 542.



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'It was like that when I got here, I swear.'

Corridor Run

Ah, the corridors of UCD Sector. The remarkably crowded corridors of UCD Sector, that is. Room 542 is a long, hard drag away. Along the way, the Troubleshooters can have all sorts of fun encounters.

Oh, marching order! Remember to ask for marching order. Whoever is carrying the box (and you need two Troubleshooters at least to carry the box) cannot really do much apart from drag the big heavy box along the corridor. Ask who is leading the merry band down the corridor and ask who is taking the all-important rear-guard position.

Anyway, all these encounters can be entirely innocent or traitorous, depending on your whim. If the players assume that everyone they meet is a traitor and start blasting, then retroactively decide that the encounter was harmless until the Troubleshooters came along – it really was just a troupe of joggers. However, if the Troubleshooters are not paranoid enough and co-operate, then you can

declare that the encounter is actually a treasonous conspiracy to steal the box. The players are damned if they do and damned if they don't.

The Joggers of Doom

From up ahead, the Troubleshooters hear a thundering noise (not that they know what thunder is). The vibrations dislodge little flakes of asbestos from the ceiling tiles. The noise gets louder and louder and then a horde of grotesquely fat INFRAREDs heave into view. It is a corridor jogging society, led by a bouncy bubble citizen named Krystal-R. *'Out of the way!' she squeaks, 'clear the corridor!' She then blows a deafening blast on her whistle.*

Everyone else in the corridor scampers to the sides or takes shelter in a doorway, leaving the Troubleshooters square in the path of the onrushing tide of jiggling blubber. Those not encumbered by the Cargo can easily dodge to the side but Troubleshooters carrying the big heavy box must choose between dropping it, holding their position or trying to drag it.

If the Troubleshooters hold their position heroically, they hold onto the box but are trampled by the joggers. Roll an attack using the mob's Combat Jogging skill of 12; being trampled by a mob inflicts S2K damage on the Troubleshooters.

If the characters try to move the box, they need to make Violence rolls... and co-ordinate their efforts. Anyone carrying the box should secretly put a die in their left or right hands, depending on which way they are dodging. Anyone secretly dropping the box should not put a die in either hand. It is impossible for a character to carry the box alone, by the way. The characters get the box out of the way only if they both move the right way and both succeed in their Violence checks.

The Traitorous Option: If the box is dropped, then it is grabbed by the INFRAREDs. Krystal-R – a fiendish agent of the Anti-Mutants – blows her whistle and shouts *'faster, purebreds! I mean fitness enthusiasts! Run, for the sake of the gene pool!' The joggers accelerate as best they can but they are impeded by both the heavy Cargo and their flab.*

The players, who are of course known for their creative and peaceful solutions to problems, will probably start blasting away. Krystal-R has a laser pistol of her own and will climb on top of the mob and fire back at any pursuing Troubleshooters. The INFRAREDs are just obeying Krystal-R's orders, so once she is eliminated the Troubleshooters can get the box back.

Vendorbots Don't Quit

Vending machines are obsolete. The future belongs to the VendorBots – mobile, artificially intelligent, hard selling vending machines. These bots don't quit. And my, those Troubleshooters dragging the Cargo along sure do look thirsty. I bet they would like a nice, refreshing can of Bouncy Bubble Beverage.

Four VendorBots roll towards the Troubleshooters; they would have grim determination etched upon their faces if they could. As it is, they have 'DRINK B3 – IT'S THE MANDATORY THING' etched on their brightly coloured plastic faces. They will start by blocking the corridor and offering the Troubleshooters a nice ice-cold can of B3, then try to convince

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those carrying the box to put it down and relax for a minute. Take a break, take a B3!

The VendorBots are surprisingly tough for vending machines and can give you a nasty (S4M) bruise by flinging cans of B3 at you. If the Troubleshooters zap them, then they have just damaged some very valuable property (plus, you really do not want to be nearby when 100 cans of Bouncy Bubble Beverage get flash-boiled by a laser beam).

The Traitorous Option: The four VendorBots have been hacked by nefarious Computer Phreaks and programmed to capture the box. If possible, the VendorBots surround the box and push it down the corridor. If they cannot do that, then they try to topple over on top of Troubleshooters (S3K damage).

That's A Very Suspicious Box, Citizen

There is a random checkpoint at the end of the corridor, guarded by a pair of **GREEN** goons. They have both got friendly name badges saying 'Hi, I'm Larry-G' or 'Hi, I'm Namenotfound-G!' respectively, pinned between their singularly unfriendly machine guns and their equally unfriendly faces. The two goons are under orders not to let anyone through into the corridor beyond, as it might interfere with the filming of *Wheel of Treachery*.

Now, the Troubleshooters are on an official mission, so they can go right in... as long as they submit to a quick search of their belongings. What is in that box, citizen? Why won't you open that box, citizen? Are you hiding something, citizen? The longer the Troubleshooters stall about opening the box, the more suspicious the two guards become. Of course, if any of the Troubleshooters suggest actually opening the box, then he is breaking the direct orders of the briefing officer...

The Traitorous Option: Larry-G is a member of the FCCC-P; Namenotfound-G is a Romantic. Larry-G suggests confiscating the box; the other agrees that confiscating the box is the best solution but that he should take custody of it. This suggestion is taken under advisement as Larry-G draws his machine gun...

Wheel...of...Treachery!

Room 542, the ultimate destination of the box, is less than impressive: peeling paint, six chairs, a table with a few old magazines. There is one locked door on the far side of the room and behind that door the Troubleshooters can hear muffled noises. It sounds like there's a crowd out there.

In fact, what is out there is the studio for *Wheel of Treachery*, a popular Alpha Complex game show. Citizens get to confess to increasingly big acts of treason and spin the big wheel. The longer you stay in the game, the more credits you can win but the more likely it is that your treason will be discovered. It is fun for all the clone family. Room 542 is the waiting room for the contestants.

As soon as the last of the Troubleshooters enter, the door locks behind them.

According to the mission briefing, the Troubleshooters are to remain here and await further instructions. So, let them sit there eyeing each other over the coffee table for a few minutes.

If anyone contacts Dirk-Y for further instructions, he drones that according to the mission schedule, they should leave the box in that room and depart the area immediately. Failing that, deploy all protective gear issued. Everything is under control. If the Troubleshooters point out that the doors are locked, he counters that they are not locked according to his mission plan document and the mission plan document is a lot more reliable than any Troubleshooter, so they are probably just not pulling hard enough.

1: There was an unfortunate database error when it came to assigning names in the Junior Citizen crèche. Still, it wasn't all bad. When he's off duty, Namenotfound-G sometimes thinks back nostalgically to those golden yearcycles of his youth, playing games with Namenotfound, Namenotfound and good old Namenotfound.



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If anyone looks at the magazines, they discover that they are fakes – the covers are real but inside the pages are almost entirely blank apart from the word 'CONFESS' in the middle of each page. This is a coded message from Internal Security – the whole game show is just a cover for the ongoing IntSec operation, as will become clear shortly.

After a few minutes, harried production executive Gina-Y bursts in through the studio door and barks at the Troubleshooters. 'Good, you're finally here! We're ready to start, move move move!'

Read this to the players:

Gina-Y herds you all through the far door. Beyond is a dark room. You can dimly make out a circular table with several high stools around it. Cables snake across the floor and you have to dodge around pieces of strange equipment. You cannot make out the room's dimensions in this dim light but you get the impression that there is a crowd of people somewhere out there.

You are ushered onto the stools and then the lights come on all at once with the intensity of a nuclear blast. You are seated around a brightly coloured wheel in front of a studio audience. There are cameras everywhere – and then famed game show host Merv-B leaps out onto the stage.

'Hello Alpha Complex! Welcome to WHEEL.... OF.... TREACHERY! Let's meet our contestants!'

Play Merv-B as the cheesiest game show host possible. He should make the players' skin crawl. After briefly interviewing each of the Troubleshooters, he turns to the game.

'Now, even the best citizen in our beloved Alpha Complex isn't perfect. We've all done one or two things that are against the rules. In each round of Wheel of Treachery, each of our contestants gets to confess some little infraction they've committed against Alpha Complex regulations. Whoever confesses the biggest treachery gets to spin the wheel.

If they're lucky, they win cash prizes or something much more important – Friend Computer's forgiveness. If they're unlucky, of course, then... Zzzap!



'Spin the wheel, make a Commie squeal.'

Now, if no-one confesses anything, then we remove some prizes from the wheel and bring out the truth serum! Everyone ready? Let's play – WHEEL! OF! TREACHERY!'

Funned to Death

Merv-B turns to the Troubleshooters in turn. 'Anything to confess, citizen?' If no-one confesses, then Merv-B's glamorous assistant Vanna-Y wheels out a series of truth enhancement devices:

- ☞ First, there are some nice Telescopamine tablets for everyone (see page 99)
- ☞ Next, a set of mysterious helmets lowered from above. These helmets do not actually do anything except hum and make your hair stand on end.
- ☞ Finally, Vanna-Y hooks each metal stool up to an electric current. The current is increased until someone confesses or bursts into flame, whichever comes first.

If someone confesses (or, if multiple Troubleshooters confess, whoever confessed the most treacherous act), they get to spin the wheel. The wheel is

divided into 20 segments, each marked with a prize. Half the wheel is made up of credit prizes, ranging from 100 to 10,000 credits. The other segments of the wheel contains stuff like 'OFFENSES IGNORED' or 'BONUS PRIZE', as well as 'BRAINSCRUB', 'TERMINATION'.

Give the players the impression that you have got a nice big table of possible results to roll on back here.

Anyway, if anyone spins the wheel, it goes around and around and around... 1,000 credits, 2,000 credits, a lifetime's supply of Hot Fun, a new PetBot... and then Merv-B presses a little hidden button and it stops on TERMINATION. Any players who succeed at a Scam Radar check notice Merv-B pressing the button. There is a flash of light and the smell of burning flesh and the unfortunate contestant vanishes in a puff of smoke.

The Troubleshooter **has not** been terminated but it does look that way. Once two or three of the Troubleshooters have been terminated, take them aside and run *The Second Briefing*.

The Second Briefing

The terminated Troubleshooters are dropped through chutes concealed beneath each stool into a tiny, cramped chamber underneath the *Wheel of Treason* studio. Waiting there is IntSec Officer Mycroft-B. He's affable and eccentric; your crazy but lovable uncle who happens to be in charge of the secret police.

'Excellent!' he hisses 'you have arrived precisely on schedule. As you have no doubt surmised, the whole mission so far has been a cunning deception! The box you carried over here is empty but thanks to the information we leaked to certain known double agents, every traitor in the sector wants it! Already, thanks to this operation, we have identified leaks with R&D and our agents are swooping in to apprehend them!

No doubt the traitors saw you on 'Wheel of Treachery' and so they now know where the box is but also believe you to be dead. Ensure no-one tampers with the box and wait with the box until the traitors arrive to steal it! My men will take over from there!

Mycroft-B indicates a tiny shaft next to the chutes. *'This access tube will take you back to the waiting room. Go now and watch to see who tries to steal the box!'* Mycroft-B crawls out through a pipe, closing the panel behind him.

Meanwhile, back at Wheel of Treachery...

Merv-B is not in on the Internal Security plan to fake the terminations of the Troubleshooter team. As far as he knows, he just incinerated several Troubleshooters before breakfast. However, Merv-B is not just a famous HPD&MC game show host, he is also a nefarious Communist and he wants the box.

After multiple terminations, the surviving players should be getting pretty nervous. Merv-B takes advantage of their mounting terror. As he is going around asking for confessions, he whispers *'if you get me the box, I'll let you live'* to one of the Troubleshooters. If that Troubleshooter refuses Merv-B's offer, then Merv-B zaps him on the next spin of the wheel and moves onto another 'shooter. If the Troubleshooter accepts, he gets to live. Merv-B picks him to spin the wheel next

and this time the wheel stops at *'SPECIAL BONUS PRIZE!'*

'Well, folks, it looks like we've got a special bonus prize winner! We'll be right back for the grand prize right after we've done a background check on the winner! See you tomorrowcycle!'

Merv-B then whispers *'I'll be waiting here'* to the Troubleshooter.

There is a flurry of activity as the audience march out, the CameraBots shut down and Merv-B and Vanna-Y are whisked away by a swarm of flunkies, producers and hangers-on, leaving the Troubleshooters alone on the soundstage. The only obvious exit is back to the waiting room.

Herbert-Y Calling

One of the Troubleshooters who was not executed or recruited by Merv-B – ideally, the Comms & Recording Officer, Team Leader or Loyalty Officer – but hey, if it is the Hygiene Officer, run with it – is contacted by Herbert-G, one of the two technicians from the R&D depot. He sounds paranoid and terrified. Interspersed with choking gasps, he informs the Troubleshooter that Lena-G, the other technician from R&D, is a traitor. The box was supposed to be empty but Lena-G loaded it with a highly classified experimental device. Do not open the box under *any* circumstances; instead, bring it back to R&D immediately.

The Quantum Traitor

At this point in the mission, everyone should be back in the waiting room along with the box. Give the Troubleshooters a minute or two to discuss the current situation or shoot each other.

Then Lena-G, the other R&D tech, contacts one of the Troubleshooters, again via PDC. *'Hi there!' she squeaks, 'there may have been a tiny, tiny problem with the box we sent you. There may possibly be a sort of a problem with the bomb thing we put in it. It was supposed to go off when the box is opened but it may have been put on a timer instead. I need you to open the box and fix the detonator. It's a simple fix. The code to open the box is 4918. Hurry, before the timer runs out!'*

So, the Troubleshooters have four contradictory sets of orders. Dirk-Y wants them to leave the area, Mycroft-B wants them to guard the box. Herbert-G claims the box must be brought back to R&D immediately and Lena-G wants them to open the box before the timer runs out. The box is either empty, or contains a valuable item, or contains a bomb that will either go off when the box is opened or when a timer runs out. Someone – or multiple someones – is lying to the Troubleshooters and the only way to determine who is by opening the box.

Until the box is opened, the Troubleshooters are in a state of quantum indecision. Like Schrödinger's cat, they are either alive but traitors or loyal but very, very dead.

Things They Might Try

Call Someone: There is no answer from either Lena-G or Herbert-G. Dirk-Y sticks to his mission script – the Troubleshooters are to deliver the box to Room 542, then leave the area. Oh and Mycroft-B does not even exist according to The Computer, so there is no use trying to call him.

Call The Computer: Your Friend, The Computer is happy to help you. Information about your mission is not available at your Security Clearance. Would you like to be connected to Dirk-Y, your briefing officer and mission supervisor?

Call A Secret Society: Why haven't you stolen/destroyed/whatevered the box yet? And anyway, how are you making this call? Aren't you in a small room with the other Troubleshooters.

Run Away: The door to the corridor is locked. The characters can try to leave via the studio but Merv-B and his security goons are lurking out there, waiting for the Troubleshooters to deliver the box to them.

Give Merv-B the box: Sure, you want to hand the box over to a Communist?

Get Someone Else To Open The Box: Ah, now we're talking. If one of the other Troubleshooters opens the box, then the unknown terror will come down on him, whatever it is.



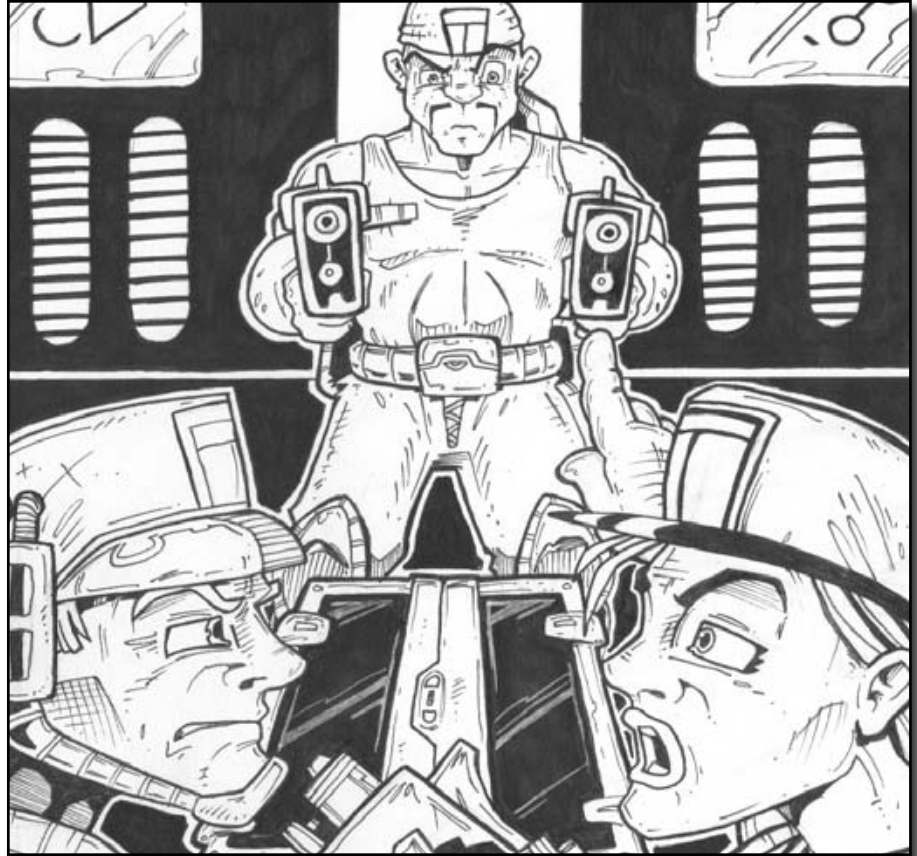
TROUBLESHOOTERS

Ending the Mission

Build the tension. Mention that there is what sounds like a ticking noise coming from within the box. Maybe they hear footsteps from the corridor outside. Check your watch, roll some dice. You could even turn this into a live action game – put a lunchbox on the table and say it's the mysterious black box.

Eventually, someone will snap. (If no-one snaps, then oops, Lena-G was right, there is a timer on the bomb). Here is the gimmick – *whatever they do is wrong*. The poor Troubleshooter who took the final action is either blown up or else the box was entirely innocent and the Troubleshooter is disobeying orders, in which case Mycroft-G's IntSec goons swoop in and arrest the traitor. The poor Troubleshooter who acted gets blown up or executed as a traitor. The others are debriefed by Dirk-Y, who considers any mention of deviations from his mission plan to be treason.

'What's the half-life of a Troubleshooter, anyway?'



38. Charts and Tables

Combat

1. Attack!

An attacking character rolls against Violence skill.

More than one character attacking: Figure everyone's attack result separately and then apply all effects simultaneously.

Attacker surprise: You may give the attacker one free attack before the target gets to respond.

2. Hit or miss?

If the attacker chose a specific target and hit successfully, that target *may* take damage.

If the attack missed, did it hit a different target instead? Target the character with the lowest Power. Serves him right.

Backfires: If the attack missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the attack may backfire. Some weapons malfunction in circumstances independent of the margin, so check the description.

If a backfire does not suit your purposes, it does not happen.

3. Multiple targets?

Can the attack plausibly hit more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the attack description or the attack roll's margin.

4. Default damage

The attack deals the damage you want it to deal. Attack descriptions suggest their default damage in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format on the Weapon Chart.

5. Defence

Does the target have armour or other defences? Does the defence apply against the attack type? If so, reduce the default damage by a number of steps equal to the target's defence value.

6. Boost

You can adjust damage based on the attack roll margin and the attack's Boost increment. Don't like the arithmetic? Use the handy chart.

7. Actual damage

If the attack's damage is reduced to nothing, the attack still hits the target but it has no effect.

38. CHARTS AND TABLES

Damage steps

Step	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
characters	Okay	Snafu	Wounded	Maimed	Down	Killed	Vaporised
objects	Okay	Lightly damaged	Impaired	Heavily damaged	Busted	Junked	Vaporised
treason	Okay	Probation	Censure	Medication	Brainscrub	Termination	Erasure

Boost chart

Every attack or accusation does exactly the damage you want. For guidance, use the attack's Minimum-Boost-Maximum ratings. You do not need a table to figure the damage from any weapon or treason accusation. Here is the in-your-head method:

1. Roll 1d20 and compare it to the success chance number. If you roll the number or lower, that is a success.
2. Find the attack's Minimum damage. Now subtract the target's defences: armour for a combat attack, Access rating for a treason accusation. If you want to use the Damage steps chart above, start at the Minimum damage and count to the left one column for each step of defence.
3. How much lower was the attack's roll than its success chance number? That's the margin.
4. Divide the margin by the attack's Boost number, rounding down. That is the number of extra damage steps the attack does.
5. Add the extra damage steps to the damage you figured in step 2. On the chart above, move back to the right a number of steps equal to the extra damage. Do not move above the attack's Maximum damage.
6. Where did you end up? That is the actual damage the target takes.

Hmm. Well, you know... now that we write it out, maybe that procedure does look a little tricky, especially Step 3. So to help the division-impaired, we have created the Boost chart. No need to do (much) arithmetic in your head – just figure the margin, find it across the top row of the chart, then follow down the column to the row for the attack's Boost number. The number there is the number of extra damage steps this attack roll does, after you subtract the target's defences.

Margin	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Boost 1	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6
Boost 2	—	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6
Boost 3	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+4	+4	+4	+5	+5	+5	+6	+6	+6
Boost 4	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+3	+4	+4	+4	+4	+5
Boost 5	—	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+4
Boost 6	—	—	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3

Characters: Okay — Snafu — Wounded — Maimed — Down — Killed — Vaporised



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Weapon chart

Weapon	Wpn type	Dmg type	Min-Boost-Max	Shots	Range	Cost	Clearance	Notes
Blaster	Energy	Energy	M3K	1	50	500	O	
Brass knuckles	Hand	Impact	S5W	—	—	10	R	
Cone rifle**	Projectile	—	—	1	200	1,000	B	
Cone rifle shells**								
solid slug		Impact	W3K	1	200	100	B	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	1	200	150	B	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	1	160	120	B	
HE		Impact	W2K	1	200	200	I	area 40m
HEAT		Impact	W2K	1	200	400	I	AP, area 40m
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	200	300	B	area 8m, spray
flare		—	—	1	200	100	B	bright light
ECM		Energy	J2J	1	200	400	I	only vs. bots
gas		Bio	varies	1	200	250	B	area 30m; see note 1
tacnuke**		Energy	V1V	1	200	150,000	V	area 160m; see note 2
Cone rifle triggers**		—	—	1	—	100	B	each shell requires one trigger
Energy pistol	Energy	Energy	W3K	5	60	200	Y	
Flamethrower	Field	Energy	S3K	10	20	500	Y	area 20m, spray
Force sword	Hand	Energy	S3K	—	—	400	B	
Gauss gun	Field	Energy	W3K	100	20	500	I	20m cone; only vs. bots
Grenade	Thrown	Impact	W3K	1	20	50	R	area 5m
Hand flamer	Field	Energy	S3K	3	40	1,000	V	easily concealed
Ice gun	Projectile	Impact	S3K	25	50	500	G	spray
Knife	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	20	R	thrown range 20m
Laser pistol (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	50	25	*	needs body
Laser pistol (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	75	R	needs barrel
Laser rifle (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	100	50	*	needs body
Laser rifle (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	250	O	needs barrel
Needle gun	Projectile	Impact	S3W	10	60	750	B	AP
Neurowhip	Hand	Energy	S5M	—	—	300	G	
Plasma generator**	Field	Energy	V1V	10	—	2,000	V	area 20m (60-degree cone)

38. CHARTS AND TABLES

Weapon	Wpn type	Dmg type	Min-Boost- Max	Shots	Range	Cost	Clearance	Notes
Rock or debris	Thrown	Impact	O5W	1	20	—	any	
Rock or debris, big	Thrown	Impact	O4W	1	10	—	any	
Slugthrower	Projectile	—	—	—	—	450	Y	
solid slug		Impact	W3K	6	50	50	Y	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	3	50	75	G	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	6	40	60	Y	
HE		Impact	W2K	6	40	75	Y	
HEAT		Impact	W2K	6	40	100	G	AP
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	40	75	Y	area 3m
flare		—	—	1	40	40	Y	bright light
ECM		Energy	H2J	1	40	200	I	only vs. bots
gas		—	varies	1	40	75	Y	area 5m; see note 1
Slugthrower, semi-automatic	Projectile	—	—	—	—	750	G	spray (see note 3)
Sonic pistol	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	60	150	O	see note 4
Sonic rifle	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	100	300	O	see note 4 again
Stun gun	Field	—	Stun	6	40	250	O	see note 5
Sword	Hand	Impact	W5K	—	—	20	any	
Tangler	Field	—	—	3	50	250	G	see note 6
Truncheon	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	10	R	
Unarmed combat	Unarmed	Impact	O5K	—	—	—	any	
Used weapon	10-25% off market value; reliability varies (heh,heh!)							
Reloads/recharges	10% of the base weapon cost, unless otherwise specified. Lasers are recharged by buying a new barrel.							

Note 1: Gas effects are listed in 'Equipment', under 'Cone rifle and slugthrower' on Page 97
 Note 2: Roll damage from a tactical nuclear weapon only in extraordinary circumstances. Otherwise, assume mass vaporisation.
 Note 3: Semi-automatic slugthrowers fire slugthrower ammo at a higher rate. Solid, solid AP, dum-dum, HE and HEAT ammo can be sprayed. The other ammo types are one-shot and hence cannot be sprayed (duh).
 Note 4: A 'Wounded' result means target is deafened for one scene (not physically wounded) and stunned (see note 5) for one round.
 Note 5: This weapon stuns the target. A stunned target cannot perceive or do anything in the next round.
 Note 6: This weapon entangles the target. An entangled target cannot move and is Snafued until end of next round. Target can move when Snafu ends.
 * The laser's colour is the same as its Security Clearance
 ** Unauthorised possession of an item marked with a double asterisk (**) is treason. Possessing an unauthorised tacnuke is *big-time serious* treason.

Objects: Okay — Lightly damaged — Impaired — Heavily damaged — Busted — Junked — Vaporised



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Armour chart

	Type and protection	Cost (credits)	Clearance	Notes
ArmourAll**	4	2,500	B	hardened; full-figure
Asbestos clothing	E3	100	any	ablative
Battle armour**	6	100,000	I	hardened; full-figure
Combat suit**	5	10,000	B	hardened
Environment suit	—	1,000	G	see note 7; full-figure
Farraday suit	—	5,000	G	see note 8; full-figure
Kevlar	I3	800	O	
Reflec, legal	E1	500	varies	see note 9
illegal	E2	1,000	—	
incredibly illegal	E3	3,000	—	

Note 7: Armour protects against hazardous environments (gas, poison).

Note 8: Protects against radiation and strong magnetic fields.

Note 9: Reflec protects only against laser attacks (not other energy attacks, just lasers) of its colour or lower. The reflec's colour is its Clearance. Illegal IR-market upgrades may offer greater protection (yeah, right).

Gaining Treason Points

Treason Points can and should be awarded for any of the following disloyal acts.

Registering Your Mutation	5 points
Suspicion of Mutation Possession	2 points
Proof of Mutation Possession	5 points
Incontrovertible Proof of Mutation	10 points
Possession of Machine Empathy	20 points

Confessing to Secret Society Membership	5 points
Suspicion of Secret Society Membership	2 points
Proof of Secret Society Membership	5 points
Incontrovertible Proof of Secret Society Membership	10 points
Knowledge of Communist Doctrine	10 points
Being a Communist	50 points

Failure to complete a mission	1 point
Being the sole survivor of a mission	2 points
Turning off your PDC	1 point
Evading surveillance	1 point*

Difference in clearance levels*

Doubting The Computer	1 point*
Not being Happy	1 point*
Being out of uniform	1 point
Failing a Hygiene Inspection	1 point
Being fined	1 point*
Failure to pay a fine	1 point

Disobeying the orders of a superior	Difference*
Disobeying the orders of a mission superior	2 points*
Disobeying The Computer	5 points*

38. CHARTS AND TABLES

Failure to defer to a citizen of higher Security clearance	1 point*
Being present in a location beyond your clearance	Difference*
Possessing a Treasonous skill	10 points
Damaging or losing equipment	1-5 points*
Possessing unauthorised equipment	Difference*
Possessing illegal equipment	5 points
Downloading illegal software	5 points
Arguing with the GM	2 points
Showing knowledge of the rules	5 points
Being accused of Treason	2 points
Making a false accusation of Treason	5 points*
Unwarranted Termination	10 points*

Actions marked with a * may also call for Medication during a mission. See Medication.

Commendation Points

Executing a Traitor	2 points
Turning a Traitor over to IntSec	1 point
Unmasking a Traitor	1 point
Completing a mission	1 point
Commendation from a Superior	1 point
Successfully completing and reporting a service service	1 point
Being Extremely Happy	1 point
Heroic Act (Documented By Multicorder or other camera)	1 point
Truly Impressive Bootlicking	1 point

Tension levels by location

Entries such as '**RED** areas' means all **RED** areas not otherwise listed in specific entries.

When an area could have more than one Tension level, use the highest.

0:	Sewers; reactor cores; Outdoors; conferences with the GM
1:	IntSec interrogation chambers
2:	INFRARED areas
3:	Supply closets; garages; bot stations; HPD&MC indoctrination centres
4:	RED areas
5:	Briefing rooms; food vats; sickbays; clone tanks; PLC warehouses
6:	ORANGE areas
7:	Mess halls; waiting rooms; grooming stations; elevators and stairwells
8:	YELLOW areas
9:	R&D labs; any place with Junior Citizens (kids)
10:	GREEN areas
11:	Troubleshooter HQ; Armed Forces bases; armouries
12:	BLUE areas
13:	Termination centres; re-education centres; IntSec stations
14:	INDIGO areas
15:	Power and Tech Services control rooms; IntSec headquarters
16:	VIOLET areas
17:	Confession booths; CPU monitoring loci
18:	ULTRAVIOLET areas
19:	Central Compnodes
20:	Bathrooms



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Random crate contents

During a mission Troubleshooters often visit abandoned warehouses, disused sub-basements, dangerous factory floors and so forth. They always see the ubiquitous Large Plastic Crates, standard cubes two metres on a side, with a serial number stencilled on each face. If the Troubleshooters pry or blast one open, use this table as inspiration for what they might find inside. Roll 1d20:

- 1: 144 boxes of hand grenades, two dozen per case. They appear intact but unscrewing the tops reveals they have no fuses.
- 2: 27,648 pads of Clearance **YELLOW** sticky-notes, labelled 'From The Desk Of:'
- 3: An old-model guardbot missing its bot brain.
- 4: 1,000 fluorescent light tubes.
- 5: 1,000 rolls of duct tape.
- 6: Wingnuts. Lots and lots of wingnuts.
- 7: 8,000 **INFRARED**-Clearance colouring books, entitled 'The Computer is the Only Friend I Need.' Each copy is shrink-wrapped with a single black crayon.
- 8: Yargh! It's full of *teeth*! Millions of them! Must be leftovers from the HPD&MC Dental Hygiene Services offices. Creepies!
- 9: A load of shrink-wrapped data discs from Sector AOL, labelled 'Version 73.0.'
- 10: Communist propaganda leaflets in massive quantities.
- 11: A huge number of unused foil CruncheeTym Algae Chip bags, left over after the flavour 'Extra-Zesty Strawberry & Cheeze' was pulled from the market.
- 12: 288 boxes of Vita-Yum Meal-Substitute Bars, three dozen per box. (Expired roughly six months ago but they might still be good...)
- 13: About a million little spools of minty-fresh dental floss.
- 14: 144 cases of uncharged **RED** laser barrels, three dozen per case.
- 15: 216 cartons of misprinted Teela-R-MLY keychains, 144 per carton.
- 16: Seventy-three billion little steel ball-bearings.
- 17: Stacks and stacks of old documents and paperwork, dated three years ago. (With a high-margin Power roll and a whole lot of time, a Troubleshooter might learn something to his advantage – but more likely, not.)
- 18: Standard-issue black socks, enough for a whole army of sock-puppets.
- 19: A single first-aid kit. (Does it seem strange such a large box would only have one first-aid kit in it? Hmm.)
- 20: Internal Security agent, observing from cover. Roll 1d20 again. 1-10: Agent is at or below PCs' clearance. 11-20: Above PCs' clearance.

Random canister/barrel/vat contents

Roll 1d20:

- 1: Pure distilled water
- 2: Not-yet-recycled shower water
- 3: Raw sewage
- 4: Battery acid (concentrated sulphuric acid)
- 5: Pure hydrochloric acid
- 6: Motor oil
- 7: Gasoline
- 8: Diesel fuel
- 9: Mercury
- 10: Blood
- 11: Algae sludge (aka future Hot Fun! Mmm!)
- 12: Bouncy Bubble Beverage
- 13: Cooking oil
- 14: Reactor coolant (water – not very dangerous)
- 15: Reactor coolant (liquid sulfur – extremely dangerous)

- 16: Radioactive waste
- 17: Glue
- 18: Giant experimental amoeba
- 19: Liquid nitrogen
- 20: Nitroglycerine

Random passersby

In every battle, shots go astray. When you feel like it, roll 1d20 and consult this table if a shot misses its target. The number you roll suggests the random victim injured or killed by the stray shot. Feel free to improvise new and even more dangerous targets.

- 1-3: Nothing
- 4-5: **INFRARED** line worker
- 6: Vending machine
- 7-8: Scrubot or other bot
- 8: Confession booth
- 9: **RED** office worker
- 10: Vulture Warrior

11-12: Crate, vat, canister or barrel (roll on corresponding table to get contents)

- 13: **YELLOW** manager
- 14: Three Vulture Warriors
- 15: IntSec **GREEN** goon
- 16: **BLUE** executive
- 17: Warbot
- 18: **VIOLET** administrator
- 19: Ten Vulture Warriors
- 20: High Programmer

Information withholding

Sometimes you get tired of responding, 'I'm sorry, that information is not available at your Security Clearance'. To palm off a different excuse when you lack inspiration, roll 1d20, consult this table and use the response beside the number rolled.

38. CHARTS AND TABLES

- 1 The requested information is above the inquirer's Clearance [the default response].
- 2 The information is unavailable due to Commie sabotage.
- 3 The information is unavailable due to an unknown mutant force.
- 4 If the inquirer files the appropriate request form, it will be processed in 6-8 days.
- 5 The form to request that information is currently being revised.
- 6 The inquirer was already briefed on that. If he wasn't paying attention, it's his own fault.
- 7 Only a traitor would have a use for that information. Is the inquirer a traitor?
- 8 Give information as a printout, entirely blacked out except for pronouns and articles.
- 9 Give information as an encoded printout. If inquirer asks for the code, roll again.
- 10 If the NPC being asked is below Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**, the information is above the NPC's Clearance. If a High Programmer or The Computer, roll again.
- 11 An honest I-don't-know. If inquirer is asking The Computer, roll again.
- 12 Give obviously wrong information. 'Repeat' it a second time, completely differently and still obviously wrong.
- 13 Imply the question is a sign of unhappiness.
- 14 The NPC pretends not to hear the question.
- 15 That information is available on a need-to-know basis and is not yet required.
- 16 Information is available in a purchasable but prohibitively expensive publication.
- 17 If the NPC told the inquirer, the NPC would have to kill him. If the inquirer insists, do it and fine him 100 credits. The next clone doesn't remember the answer, so you don't need an actual answer.
- 18 Refer inquirer to a non-existent room number for that and related information.
- 19 Refer inquirer to a real room far above his Clearance.
- 20 Roll twice and vacillate between the two responses.

PLC equipment request denial table

We were going to explain when to use this table but just read the entries and you'll get it. Roll 1d20, consult this table and use the response beside the number rolled.

- 1 – 2 'I'm sorry, citizen, we appear to be temporarily all out of that item.'
- 3 – 4 'According to [your briefing officer/my supervisor/The Computer], that equipment is not necessary for your mission.'
- 5 – 6 'Certainly, right away.' *[NPC walks off for a while.]* 'I'm sorry; it appears that Commies have stolen the last of our supply. The Computer has dispatched a Troubleshooter team to solve the problem.'
- 7 – 8 'Yes, of course, one moment while I get it for you.' *[Wanders off and doesn't come back.]*
- 9 'Are you implying The Computer forgot to assign you something, citizen?'
- 10
- 11 'For that you need to fill out Form #B5AT67.' *[When asked for the form, say it requires another form and so on until they give up. If it looks like they will keep going, send them off to some remote location, where they will fall into a food vat or something.]*
- 12
- 13 No one anywhere in the entirety of PLC has ever heard of the requested item or at least doesn't admit it.
- 14
- 15 The requested item requires a deposit of an insanely large number of credits.
- 16
- 17 'That item has been sent to our labs for testing due to apparent design flaws. We may still have some in stock, though, if you want me to go check...'
- 18
- 19 'Certainly, here you go.' *[The clerk provides an obviously mistaken order. Instead of the requested cone rifle, the Troubleshooters receive, say, 10 metres of twine.]*
- 20



TROUBLESHOOTERS

39. Alternate Styles of Play

PARANOIA Classic is a slapstick comedic style popular with longtime fans. Troubleshooters are sometimes revered, sometimes held in contempt; it varies among GMs and missions. Troubleshooters run through a clone or two before the mission proper even starts and may easily exhaust a six-pack of clones before it ends. Character names are usually sleazy puns.

The Computer means well and would usually be right, given accurate data but that never happens and consequently it is totally paranoid. Alpha Complex seems to be in permanent collapse, burdened by uncontrollable bureaucracy, infrastructural calamities and the occasional giant radioactive mutant cockroach.

Classic play is best suited to missions that last only one or a few play sessions. The Secret Society missions you assign the PCs turn them at each other's throats from the first scene onward. It is possible to play a Classic miniseries with an ongoing Troubleshooter team, though individual member PCs join and die off fairly quickly.

That is how **PARANOIA** is usually played and it is the tone assumed by this rulebook.

However, drawled the Famous Game Designer, there are *other* ways to play. Different ways. Ways that might suit your group better, maybe. Two of these styles are **Straight** and **Zap**.

Straight

PARANOIA Straight is a darkly satiric style emphasising tension, mutual suspicion, spying, subterfuge and careful collection of evidence. Alpha Complex is an oppressive totalitarian bureaucracy that works scarily well, using its own insane but comprehensible logic. The all-powerful Computer, though willing to listen to reason, is always four steps ahead of the players. Troubleshooters are generally esteemed as heroic adventurers. Troubleshooting is a high-risk, high-

payoff path to social advancement and those who play it smart and low-key can learn to survive in the machinery of oppression. Troubleshooters are not automatically rivals from the first minute but gradually develop personal enmities and evidence dossiers.

Zap

PARANOIA Zap (some GMs prefer the terms 'Frantic' or 'Excessive') is a frenzied cartoon style that arises spontaneously among groups new to the game. Troubleshooters are comically disposable and held in low esteem. A Troubleshooter's first clone probably dies in the first minute of play and the rest follow at maybe 90-second intervals. Fire fights erupt if a player even asks, 'What exactly *is* Bouncy Bubble Beverage?' No character name is too outlandish to wrestle into the naming scheme. The Computer reasons in whatever perverse way some anonymous High Programmer has coded. Alpha Complex is a backdrop of perpetual chaos and mayhem, insofar as anyone pays attention. Missions typically parody current pop culture.

Straight Style

Character Generation: You create your Troubleshooters in the usual way. The only change is that **Straight** characters always start out at Degree 1 in their Secret Society and characters start out with 1,000 credits, not 100. You'll need it.

Perversity: The GM should be a lot stingier with Perversity in **Straight** games. Troubleshooters should rely on planning and treachery, not manipulating fate in their favour.

Clones: In **Straight** style, all citizens are permitted to purchase replacement six-packs of clones when they run out. To discourage frivolous dying, The Computer has decreed that your first additional six-pack (Clones 7-12) costs 6,000 credits – 1,000 per clone. The price goes up for each subsequent six-pack.

The price progression after the 12th clone is not available at your Clearance. To pay for your fifth or sixth six-pack, you may need to take an odd job on the side. Maybe two odd jobs. Maybe two hundred.

If you lack the credits to pay for a new six-pack, your credit balance goes negative. If your negative credit balance dips too low, your clone bank forecloses and wipes your template. Once your deadbeat Troubleshooter dies, start a new character. The threshold for this catastrophe is 10 times the monthly living expenses associated with your Clearance, described under 'Living Expenses'. For example, if you are Red Clearance, with expenses of 1,000 credits a month, the clone bank forecloses when your balance hits –10,000.

The bright spot here is if someone else kills you without having adequate evidence of your treason, the impetuous murderer is liable for the cost of your new clone – assuming you can find the killer.

Credits: Credits play a much bigger role in **Straight** games. Troubleshooters receive a salary depending on their Security Clearance. Coincidentally, this salary is roughly equal to your monthly living expenses, allowing him to live comfortably at the status you have been assigned, assuming you do not incur any added expenses.

Like, say, being fined for insubordination, or failing a hygiene inspection, or damaging equipment, or accidentally terminating the wrong citizen, or having your identity stolen or any of the other ways you might lose money. Now, you might be able to get some bonus credits from completing missions but you will need that cash to buy extra clones to make up for the ones lost in the line of duty. To maintain your standard of living, you may need to get extra credits from...well, less legal activities, like the **INFRARED** market, selling blackmail material through C-Bay or nefarious Secret Society schemes.

39. ALTERNATE STYLES OF PLAY

Features of the three play styles

	Classic	Straight	Zap
Names	Tois-R-USS-1, Mick-R-THY-2, Joe-B-LOW-4.	John-R-HCN-1, Ben-R-GOX-2, Cleo-B-QRK-5.	Vegeta-R-IAN-2, Sco-O-OOP-2, Outland-I-ISH-3, Myheadh-U-RTS-6, Tedt-U-RNR-6.
Activities	Trying to find the briefing room; dying from experimental equipment; standing in long lines at supply desks; dying in fire fights at the hose-job mission site; being executed immediately after debriefing.	Compiling evidence on rivals; currying favour with supervisors and Secret Society contacts; buying weird stuff on the IR market; scamming credits from NPCs or being scammed.	Shooting things.
Typical line	'Friend Computer, due to Commie sabotage of your excellent directions to our mission briefing room, our first team got misdirected into an open reactor core. It is barely possible the deaths of our previous clones – in the line of duty! Serving you! – were a contributing factor in the meltdown of that power station and the reduction of ARG sector to bubbling slag.'	'Officer, this video clearly shows our team leader engaging in unauthorised destruction of an algae-chip vending machine, damaging the higher Clearance citizen whose arm was stuck in the machine and then arguing with the wounded citizen about the resulting much-deserved fine.'	'You're a traitor!' (<i>Zapzapzapzapzap!</i>)
Mutant powers	Physically impossible for the most part but fun. Backfires can have spectacular effects. Registered mutants act like any ordinary citizen.	Generally abilities a person could conceivably have, like rubbery bones. Backfires are inconvenient but plausible. Registered mutants may have unsettling, superior attitudes: 'We're the future, and you're in our way.'	Waaay out there. Backfires can turn people into furniture, cartoon characters or conceivably even Bulgarians. 'Registered mutant? Who cares? I shoot him!'
Higher Clearance citizens	Officious bureaucrats.	Shrewd, cagy technocrats.	Malevolent agents of chaos.
High Programmers	Aloof hobbyists constantly plotting against each other.	Brilliant, highly functional psychopaths. Hannibal Lecter in white.	Faceless plot devices.
Commies	A Secret Society basically like the rest, though more treasonous than most.	Nutcases who blow up buildings full of innocent people.	Wear bearskin hats and fake moustaches; speak in thick <i>Rrrrooshian</i> accents, ending most nouns in '-ski'.
R&D equipment	Outlandishly impractical.	A passing nod to scientific plausibility; sensible people might actually consider inventing these gadgets.	Totally off the wall – Trans-Dimensional Collapsatrons, quantum black holes, Astro the Wonder Bot.
Puns and parodies	Wherever they fit.	No. Absolutely lethal to the tone.	Every moment.
Roleplaying hints	Players shift with wondrous facility among truckling subservience (to The Computer and higher Clearance citizens), self-righteous accusation, brazen lying, malingering, deceit and craven rabbit-like terror.	Some Straight-style players take pride in roleplaying their characters with square-jawed solemnity in even the most ludicrous circumstances.	'Roleplaying'? That's treason! (<i>Zapzapzapzapzap!</i>)



TROUBLESHOOTERS

Clearance	Monthly Salary/Living Expenses
INFRARED	100 credits
RED	1,000 credits
ORANGE	2,000 credits
YELLOW	3,000 credits
GREEN	10,000 credits
BLUE	40,000 credits
INDIGO	100,000 credits
VIOLET	600,000 credits
ULTRAVIOLET	[not available at your Security Clearance]

Accusations of treason: Instead of Treason Points, **Straight** style play uses Treason Damage. Treason Damage works like normal damage:

- ☉ The accuser makes an attack using his Management skill.
- ☉ The GM works out the minimum and maximum damage and the Boost number.
- ☉ The target's Access is applied as Armour, reducing the minimum damage.
- ☉ The margin of success is divided by the Boost number to determine the Boost.
- ☉ The Boost is applied to the minimum damage, determining the final punishment.

Treason damage runs **Okay-Probation-Censure-Medication-Brainscrub-Termination-Erasure**.

Character conditions: Okay, Probation, Censure, Medication, Brainscrub, Termination & Re-patterning (Twiddling), Erasure

Offences are listed in **Minimum-Boost-Maximum** format. *Example:* P5B means the offense's default minimum correction is Probation, its Boost (the margin needed to add one treason damage step) is 4 and the maximum correction is Brainscrub.

x = number of ranks of difference in Security Clearance between the offender and the individual or object involved in the offense. For instance, a **RED** citizen who insubordinately questions a **GREEN** superior's judgment (an offense listed as xx100) earns (3x100=) a 300 credit fine.

% = percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary. **cr** = credits. **Replacement cost** = the cost in credits to replace the destroyed item or clone)

Advancement: In **Straight** games, it's much more likely that your character will

survive for multiple missions. Therefore, the rate of advancement in **Straight** is slowed. At the end of each mission, you can increase any Specialty by 1. Alternatively, you can forego increasing any Specialty for three missions and gain a new Specialty at the level of the base skill +4. You cannot increase your basic skills in **Straight**.

Running Straight Games

Straight games aim to mine a rich vein of black humour, of existential despair in the face of bureaucracy that has metastasised into institutionalised madness. This style can be extremely interesting, drawing on the books that inspired **PARANOIA** in the first place. Using the designated **Straight** rules with experienced **PARANOIA** players, you can keep characters alive long enough to play a 'miniseries', a linked set of missions with continuing characters. Avoid building ready-made rivalries into the PCs' missions; they will develop these themselves. Players immerse themselves in the setting, learn the ropes and develop emotional commitment to their characters. In such a setting you can scare them thoroughly, toes to eyebrows.

Straight influences: Franz Kafka; George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Philip K. Dick's *The Penultimate Truth*, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Stanislaw Lem's *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*; movies: *THX-1138*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Brazil*, *Equilibrium*, *Soylent Green*; TV: the BBC-TV series *The Office* and the best episodes of the 1960s TV series *The Prisoner*.

Zap Style

Character Generation: **Zap** characters are generated in the normal fashion. Optionally, you can skip Narrow specialties, as they are especially unlikely to come up in **Zap** games. Oh, **Zap** characters roll 1d20 for their Degree.

Yes, this does mean that **Zap** characters can start out at the top rung of a society with an army of fanatic followers, even if they don't have a clue about how the society works.

Perversity: Don't bother with Perversity in **Zap** games – just roll the dice a lot.

Clones: Unchanged, although the GM may wish to give extra clones – many **Zap** players go through their initial six-pack before they get to the briefing room.

Credits: Don't bother with them.

Accusations of treason: Some **Zap** games don't even bother with accusations – if someone does something that seems even vaguely treasonous, shoot 'em. That's probably excessive, even for **Zap**. We recommend using Treason Points but declare a Troubleshooter is a traitor at 5 Treason Points, not 20.

Advancement: Shouldn't happen.

Running Zap Games

Zap is suited for one-shot missions, good breathers after long campaigns in other games. People only vaguely familiar with **PARANOIA** seem to think this is the way everyone plays. **Zap** traditionally involves broad pop-culture parodies, often of other roleplaying games, movies, television shows or anything else, really. Puns are mandatory.

Zap influences: Nearly every other roleplaying game, in a negative way. Other roleplaying games exhort players to work together heroically for the good of all. When these newbie players hit Alpha Complex, a liberating adrenaline rush of pure anarchy gives them twitchy laser fingers. Many groups eventually gravitate to one of the other styles.

39. ALTERNATE STYLES OF PLAY

Straight Games

Offence	Punishment
Accusations of treason	
Being accused of treason by a citizen of lower Clearance	unchanged
By a citizen of equal Clearance	unchanged
By a citizen of higher Clearance	-1 Boost (min. 1)
Falsely accusing a lower Clearance citizen of treason	C4M
A citizen of equal Clearance	P4M
A citizen of higher Clearance	C3B
Conduct and bearing	
Arguing with the Gamemaster	Medication
Assaulting a lower Clearance citizen	P5T
A citizen of equal Clearance	C3T
A citizen of higher Clearance	M3T
Being present in a location of higher Security Clearance	P4C + xx5% cr
Damaging, destroying or losing assigned equipment	P3C + replacement cost
Failure to defer to a citizen of higher Security Clearance	cost
Theft of equipment, possessions or files, including filesharing	P4M + xx5% cr
Framing a citizen of lower Clearance for a crime	P4C
A citizen of equal Clearance	C4B
A citizen of higher Clearance	C4T
Possessing a treasonous (Unhealthy) skill	M4E
Possessing unauthorised food, information or equipment	Brainscrub
Refusing to take a prescribed drug	O2C + xx5% cr
Threatening the physical or financial safety of a lower Clearance citizen	Censure
A citizen of equal Clearance	P4B
A citizen of higher Clearance	C3B
Unauthorised destruction of higher Clearance property	M3B
Demonstrating knowledge of the PARANOIA rules above the player's Clearance	P4M + xx5% cr
Lying to the Gamemaster	+ replacement cost Brain scrub Termination!
Missions	
Disobeying an order given by a mission superior	P5B
Disobeying an order given by The Computer	C5T
Failure to complete a mission	P4M
Failure to complete a service service	P5M
Refusing the assignment of a service service	P5M
Refusing to accept a mission	Termination
Mutation	
Mutation registration	Medication
Suspicion of mutation possession	C4B
Proof of mutation possession	M3B
Incontrovertible proof of mutation possession	M3T
Possession of Machine Empathy	Erasure
Secret Society membership	
Confessing to Secret Society membership	M3B
Suspicion of Secret Society membership	C3B
Proof of Secret Society membership	M3T
Incontrovertible proof of Secret Society membership	B3T
Knowledge of Communist doctrine	B2T
Being a Communist	B1E
Terminations	
Terminating a lower Clearance citizen without prior authorisation or evidence	M3T + replacement cost
A citizen of equal Clearance	cost
A citizen of higher Clearance	B3E + replacement cost
	cost
	T1E + replacement cost
	cost



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PARANOIA™

CHARACTER SHEET

Troubleshooter: _____ - _____ - _____ - 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____
Name Clearance Sector Clone number

Troubleshooter's gender: M F Other Player: _____

Service group: _____

Tics: _____

MANDATORY BONUS DUTY

- Team leader
- Loyalty officer
- Hygiene officer
- Comm & recording
- Equipment Guy
- Happiness officer
- _____

ACTION SKILLS

Management	Stealth	Violence
Bootlicking _____	Concealment _____	Agility _____
Chutzpah _____	Disguise _____	*Energy Weapons (Violence +4) _____
Con Games _____	Scam Radar _____	Demolition _____
Hygiene _____	Security Systems _____	Field Weapons _____
Interrogation _____	Shadowing _____	Fine Manipulation _____
Intimidation _____	Sleight of Hand _____	Hand Weapons _____
Moxie _____	Sneaking _____	Projectile Weapons _____
Oratory _____	Surveillance _____	Thrown Weapons _____
_____	_____	Unarmed Combat _____
_____	_____	Vehicular Combat _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

Hardware	Software	Wetware
Bot Ops & Maintenance _____	Bot Programming _____	Biosciences _____
Chemical Engineering _____	C-Bay _____	Bioweapons _____
Electronic Engineering _____	Data Analysis _____	Cloning _____
Habitat Engineering _____	Data Search _____	Medical _____
Mechanical Engineering _____	Financial Systems _____	Outdoor Life _____
Nuclear Engineering _____	Hacking _____	Pharmatherapy _____
Vehicle Ops & Maintenance _____	Operating Systems _____	Psychotherapy _____
Weapon & Armor Maintenance _____	Vehicle Programming _____	Suggestion _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

HAPPINESS IS MANDATORY!

PARANOIA™



CHARACTER SHEET (SECRET SIDE)

Mutant power: _____ Registered

Secret society: _____ Degree: _____

Current society mission: _____

Attribute ratings: Power **CLASSIFIED**

Access **CLASSIFIED**

SECRET SKILLS		
Uncommon	Unlikely	Unhealthy
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EQUIPMENT		
Personal	Assigned	Treasonous
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

OTHER STUFF		
Credits	Perversity	Treason Points and evidence against others
_____	_____	_____

SECRET ARE TREASON!

PARANOIA

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